Days and Hours in a Garden

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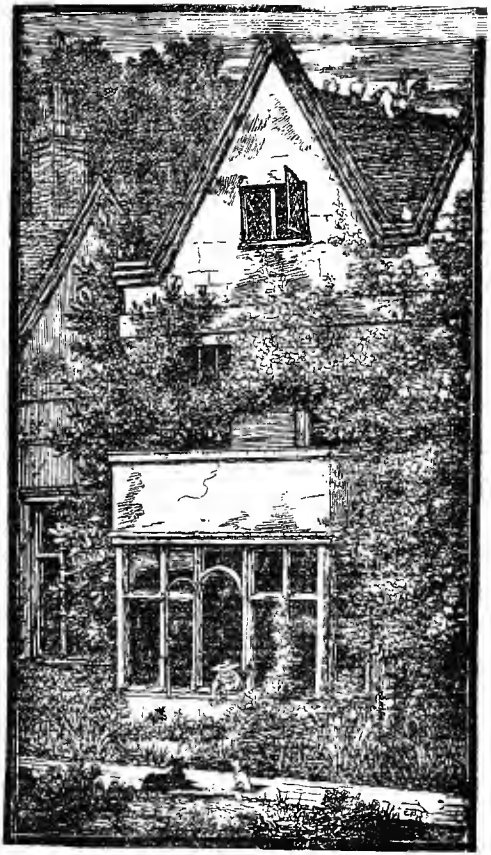


At the South Window.

DAYS AND HOURS IN A GARDEN.

BY

"E. V. B."

"God Almighty first planted a garden;
And indeed it is the purest of human pleasures."

BACON.

NINTH EDITION.

LONDON:
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1896.

TO

RICHARD CAVENDISH BOYLE.

WHOSE LOVE FOR NATURE AND FOR ART,

YEARS HAD NOT CHILLED

NOR TROUBLE CHANGED,

THESE RECORDS OF OUR GARDEN

WERE INSCRIBED BY

E. V. B.,

IN 1884.

PREFACE.

IF for a sixth reprint of DAYS AND HOURS IN A GARDEN a new Preface was deemed advisable, still more so, perhaps, should there be something new prefixed to the Seventh Edition, although, indeed, it contains nothing that in any sense is new. Neither new words nor any new vignettes appear therein. Nevertheless we venture to hope that perhaps new readers may be found. Since the last edition was published some three years have come and gone, with their world-old roll of seasons and their burden of inevitable change. The garden has three times slept beneath the rains and the snows of winter, and has awakened in spring with the birds and the bees. Meanwhile, the shrubs are taller and larger, and the trees have extended their roots and stretched out their branches over lawns and gravel paths. And the summer shade, so coveted in other

days, has broadened, while, on the other hand, it has become more hard to maintain in their wonted brilliancy our borders and flowerful closes. The axe and the pruning-knife have been busy during the winter months; and many a fine Laurel, in all its wealth of glossy green, has been laid low, and with Yew and the full-foliaged Phylleria, and more than one tall Deodara,—become a burnt sacrifice to "Apollo's sunny ray." For the south sunshine must be let in, no matter what the cost. In certain ways the garden may be said to *suffer* change; and chiefly when the grace and softly rounded loveliness of various evergreens which do not bear the shears—Cryptomeria Elegans, Red Cedar, and the like—after a course of years begins to wane. Even to the upward-pointing Cypress middle life in an English garden is not becoming. And as the larger trees increase in size, so the overshadowed lawns diminish. And thus the slower progress of some of our trees has given place to a rapid growth, which bids fair to overstep all bounds of such limited space as ours. The Douglas Fir and the branching Cedar of Lebanon keep growing into one another, while Excelsa touches them both, and wants to reach across to the clump of Yew and Laburnum. Their near neighbour the Sequoia already rises to the height of fifty

feet, and measures over nine feet round at some two feet from the ground. Nordmaniana alone (most beautiful of all), through having five times lost his leader, is forced to greater moderation. Still, although no future of green maturity can ever compensate the earlier, expectant delight of watching our young trees' youth, all is not lost; for the pleasures carried away by Time, Time itself replaces by others to the full as sweet. It may be that favourite plants become established and yield a larger harvest of beauty, or that deep-laid plans ripen into bright perfection, while a thousand garden joys arise fresh each year, nay, well-nigh every day. As to the living frequenters of the garden, whose presence there for the most part enhances our enjoyment of it, the tomtits and nuthatches, are as busy with the cocoanuts which hang for their use all winter from the Rose-arches as the mice and the sparrows are with the crocuses; the white pigeons still circle in the air and settle upon the gables, or preen their feathers in the sunshine amongst the yellow stonecrop at the base of the old grey pillar in the parterr; the swallows return year by year to their nests within the porch; but the faithful satin-coated Collie lies still for ever under the turf by the ivied wall, and the earth lies heavy on his noble head. For these thirteen

summers past he had taken his pleasure in the garden—had chased marauding cats, or bounded after apples with any playfellow of the hour, while his glad bark rang again; or as in later days, had gravely followed the steps of his mistress about the walks, or rolled upon the grass, or watched with lazy but unfailing interest his friend the Gardener at work. Four words graven on a little white marble tablet that shines amidst the dark ivy-leaves on the wall record his name and character:—

CASSIO.

TENDER AND TRUE.

May, 1876.] [*Nov.*, 1889.

Already the Snowdrops are giving way before impatient Hepaticas and Primroses, the bare Elms are thickening with purple, and we begin to count the Gentian buds. Everywhere Nature repairs herself in ceaseless round. Only in our human lives some vacant spots there may be, where the grass will not grow green again.

E. V. B.

HUNTERCOMBE MANOR,
February, 1890.

OCTOBER.

Fas est hic, Indulgere Genio.

I.

OCTOBER 17, 1882.

Of Nuns and White Owls; Yews, Thrushes, and Nut-crackers.

THE GARDEN'S STORY. It is only eleven years old, though the place itself is an old place—an old place without a history, for scarce a record remains of it anywhere that we have ever found. Its name occurs on a headstone in the parish churchyard, and on one or two monuments within the chancel of the parish church. There is brief mention of it in Evelyn's *Diary*. It is there described as "a very pretty seate in the forest, on a flat, with gardens exquisitely kept, tho' large, and the house, a staunch good old building." It seems George Evelyn (the author's cousin) was amongst the many who have lived here once. At that time eighty acres of wood

surrounded the house, where now there lies a treeless stretch of flat cornfields. Quite near, across the road, are the ruins of an ancient nunnery. Our meadow under the high convent wall is called the Walk Meadow, because here the nuns used to walk. The great Walnut tree, which they might possibly have known, only died after we came. It was cut down for firewood, and its hollows were full of big chestnut-coloured "rat bats," very fierce and strong. At that time also white owls lived in the ruins, and used to come floating over the lawn at twilight—until the days of gun licenses, since when, they have disappeared. Dim legends surround the place, but nothing clear or certain is known or even said, and there is not a ghost anywhere. All we know is, that since taking possession, wherever a hole is dug in the garden to plant a tree, the spade is sure to strike against some old brick foundation of such firm construction that they have to use the pick to break it up. Bones of large dogs also are found all about the place whenever the ground is broken—remains of the watch dogs, or hunting dogs,

of the olden time—also quaintly shaped tobacco-pipes. I know of nothing to support the tradition that monks abode here once. There were signs of an upstairs room having at some remote time been used as a chapel; a piscina in the wall and a narrow lancet window having been found and destroyed, when the house was in the builder's hands eleven years ago. Broken arches, also, and mouldings in chalk and stone, were dug up out of the foundations of some outhouses at the same time. "They say" there is an underground passage between the Abbey and the house, but we do not believe it, and we do not believe in the murder of a monk for his money, said to have been committed by a nun in the upper room now a guest-chamber. Such vague traditions are sure to hang around old walls, like mists about a damp meadow. Very distinct, however, and carved in no vague characters, are certain initials and dates still visible on the stems of the trees in the Lime avenue. For in old times—

> "Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
> Cut in these trees their mistress' name."

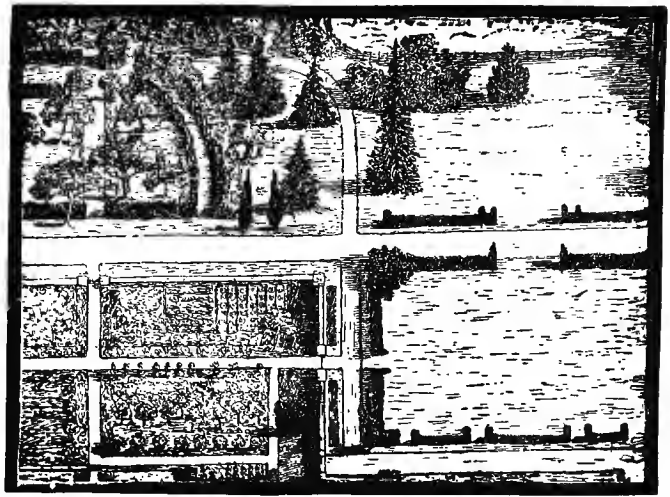
When the trees are bare and the western sky is bright, you can see them quite plainly—large capital letters, often a pair, enclosed in a large heart with the date. The dates run from 1668 on to late in 1700. Those old village lovers must have had sharp pen-knives, which cut deep! They and their names have long passed away and been forgotten; but, for so much as is traced in the living bark, these Limes have proved as good as any marble monument; much better than the long wooden "rails" which are still in fashion hereabouts. Since the place was ours this short avenue of twenty-four trees has been taken in from the public road; and now the Limes give us cool shade and fragrance and many midges in the hot summer days. I fear there is nothing more to be discovered about the past history of the House than we now already know. We must be content, and follow as we best may George Herbert's concise admonition—

> "When you chance for to find
> An old house to your mind,
> Be good to the poor,
> As God gives you store."

We have had the great pleasure of making the garden. The feature of the place was, and is, two symmetrically planted groups of magnificent Elms in the park field, in which every season we hope the rooks will build. There was everything to be done in the garden, to which these Elms form a background. We found hardly any flowers; a large square lawn laid out in beds, with unsatisfactory turf and shrubberies beyond, a long, broad terrace walk, old brick walls, with stone balls on the corners, two or three old wrought iron gates in the wrong places, dabs of kitchen garden and potato plots, stable-yard and carriage entrance occupying the whole south front, with a few pleasant trees, a young Wellingtonia, a Stone Pine, a Venetian Sumach (*Rhus cotinus*), and a very large red Chestnut (from a seed brought from Spain in the waistcoat pocket of one of our predecessors here, fifty years ago, and said to be the first of the kind raised in England). Such was our new playground in 1871. Here we brought a skilful Gardener, possessed of common sense and uncommon good taste —can one say much more in a few words?

—and aided by our own most unscientific but exceeding love for flowers and gardening, we set to work at once. These "gardens on a flat" are transformed.

There now are close-trimmed Yew hedges, some of those first planted being 8 feet 6 inches high, and nearly 3 feet through, while others are kept low and square. There are Yews cut in pyramids and buttresses against the walls, and Yews in every stage of natural growth. I love the English Yew, with its "thousand years of gloom!" (an age that ours, however, have not yet attained). The Wellingtonia, planted in 1866, has shot up to over forty feet high, and far outgrown its youthful Jack-in-the-Green look. The Stone Pine, alas! has split in two, and been propped up; and although half killed since by frost, it yet bears a yearly harvest of fine cones, chiefly collected for use as fire revivers—though the seeds ripen for sowing, or eating. The borders are filled with the dearest old-fashioned plants; the main entrance is removed to the north side; the stable-yard is removed also, and instead thereof are turf and straight walks, and a sun-dial, and a



Kitchen Garden, East Lawn, etc.

parterre for bedding-out things—the sole plot allowed here for scarlet Pelargoniums and the like. In this parterre occurs the only foliage plant we tolerate—a deep crimson velvet-leaved Coleus. The centre bed is a raised square of yellow Stonecrop and little white Harebells; with an old stone pedestal, found in a stonemason's yard, bearing a leaden inscription—"to Deborah"—surmounted by a ball, on which the white pigeons picturesquely perch. There are green walks between Yew hedges and flower borders, Beech hedges, and a long green tunnel—the *Allée Verte*—so named in remembrance of a bower-walk in an old family place, no longer in existence. There are nooks and corners, and a grand, well-shaded tennis-lawn, and crown of all, there is the "Fantaisie"! This is a tiny plantation in the field—I mean the Park—date 1874, connected with the garden by a turf walk, with a breadth of flowers and young evergreen trees intermixed, on either hand. Here all my most favourite flowers grow in wild profusion. The turf walk is lost, after a break of Golden Yew, in a little wood—a few paces round—just large enough

for the birds to build in, and with room for half-a-dozen wild Hyacinths and a dozen Primroses under the trees; with moss, Wood Sorrel, and white and puce-coloured Periwinkles, and many a wild thing, meant to encourage the delusion of a savage wild! I am afraid I never can be quite serious about a garden; I always am inclined to find delight in fancies, and reminiscences of a child's garden, and the desire to get everything into it if I could. This "Fantaisie" was a dream of delight during the past summer—from April, when a nightingale possessed in song the half-hidden entrance under low embowering Elm branches and Syringa—through all the fairy days and months, up to quite lately. Yes, even last week, it was fragrant with Mignonette and Ragged Jack (I mean that Alpine Pink *Dianthus Plumarius*), gay with yellow Zinnias and blue Salvia in rich luxuriance, with a host of smaller, less showy things—with bunches of crimson Roses, and pink La France, blooming out from a perfect mist of white and pinkish Japan Anemones, white Sweet Peas, and a few broad Sunflowers

towering at the back—their great stems coruscating all over with stars of gold; and here and there clusters of purple Clematis, leaning sadly down from a faggot of brown leaves and dead, wiry stalks,—or turning from their weak embrace of some red-brown Cryptomeria Elegans. Even last week the borders throughout the garden looked filled and cheerful—brilliant with scarlet Lobelia and tall deep red Phloxes, and bushes of blue-leaved starry Marguerites, and the three varieties of Japan Anemone, with strange orange Tigridias and Auratum Lilies and Ladies' Pincushion (*Scabious*, the "Saudades" of the Portuguese language of Flowers), and every kind of late as well as summer Roses, the evening Primrose (*Œnothera*) making sunshine in each shady spot, with here and there the burning flame of a Tritoma; though these last have not done well this autumn.

Out near the carriage drive are Golden Rod and crimsoned patches of Azalea, and a second blow of late and self-sown Himalayan (so called) Poppies. In one narrow bit of south border one finds that pretty blue

daisy (*Kaulfussia Amelloides*)—such an odd, pretty little thing. I remember a bed of it in the garden of my childhood, and I possess a portrait of it, done for me by my mother; and then, never met with it again till a year or two ago, when unexpectedly it looked up at me, somewhere in a remote country churchyard. I am afraid our present stock comes from that very plant. Until now, the long border of many-coloured Verbenas was still rather gay, and the three east gables of the house were all aflame with Virginian Creeper. But two days of rain spoilt us entirely. The variegated Maple slipped its white garment all at once in the night, causing a melancholy gap. In the kitchen garden a bright red Rose or two remains, but along the east border the half-blown buds are rotted away. In the centre of one drenched pink bloom I saw a poor drone, drowned as he sat idly there. Small black-headed titmice are jerking about among the tallest Rose trees, insect hunting; and still tinier wrens flit here and there, bent on the same quest. Great spotted missel thrushes are now haunting the pillar Yews, beginning

to taste the luscious banquet just ready for them. While thus perched amongst the sweet scarlet Yew berries and dark foliage, the thrushes always bring to one's mind a design in old tapestry.

And this reminds me of the good and abundant fruit-feast we have ourselves enjoyed this season. Strawberries and Raspberries were not much, but such Gooseberries, Apricots, and Nectarines! Peaches, plenty enough, but no flavour. Figs, enough to satisfy even *our* greediness,—though we have but one tree, on a west wall. Pears, especially Louise Bonne, first-rate and plenty. Apples, a small crop, but sufficient. Wood Strawberries have been ripening under the windows till within the last few days: I planted them there for the sake of the delicious smell of the leaves when decaying —a smell said to be perceptible only to the happy few. Nuts (Filberts and Kentish Cobs) were plentiful, but we were only allowed a very few dishes of them. A large number of nuthatches settled in the garden as soon as the nuts were ripe; they nipped them off, and, carrying them to the old

Acacia tree, which stands conveniently near, stuck them in the rough bark and cracked them at their ease (or rather punched holes in them). The Acacia's trunk at one time quite bristled over with the empty nut-shells, while the husks lay at the roots. The fun of watching these busy thieves at work more than made up for the loss of nuts. We had a great abundance of large green and yellow wall Plums, also a fair quantity of purple. Of sweet Cherries, unless gathered rather unripe, my dear blackbirds and starlings never leave us many. But there were a good lot of Morellos; they don't care a bit for them. Whilst on the subject of fruit, let me say that never a shot is fired in the garden, unless to destroy weazels. Our "garden's sacred round" is free to every bird that flies—the delight of seeing them, and of hearing their music, compensates to the full any ravages they may indulge in. Thanks to netting without stint, and our Gardener's incomparable patience and longsuffering, I enjoy the garden and my birds in peace; and if they ever do any harm, we never know it; fruit and green

Peas never fail us! . . Here is a sunny morning; and the cows are whisking their tails under the Elms, as if it were July. But indeed the last lingering trace of summer has vanished: the garden is in ruins, and already the redbreast is singing songs of triumph.

NOVEMBER.

"The True Pleasure of a Garden."—BACON.

II.

NOVEMBER, 1882.

Of Blossoms, Buds, and Bowers—Of May and June and July Flowers.

November 3.—The ruin is complete! and cleared away, too. . . . Yet there is consolation, and something very comfortable, in the neatness of the dug borders, and the beds made up for the winter.

The symmetrically banked-up Celery—crested with the richest green, in the kitchen garden—rather takes my fancy; so also does the fine bit of colour in some huge heaps of dead leaves, that I see already stored in the rubbish yard. The dead leaves have to be swept away from lawn and garden walks—but I believe we do not con-

sider any except those of Beach and Oak to be of much service. It is my heresy, that leaves do not fall till the goodness of them has decayed. They are of use, however, when left to cover the ground above tender roots. In the Fantaisie the earthy bed can scarce be seen, so close lies this warm counterpane of leaves! The great Elms, on the greyest days, now make sunshine of their own. Their lofty breadths of yellow gold tower above the zone of garden trees. When the sun illumines them, and the light winds pass, it is a dream to watch the glittering fall of autumn leaves. The ancient times return, and Jove once more showers gold around some sleeping Danae! During the first days of the month, the parterr was done, Tulips put in, and a lot of Crocuses in double row. In a few beds the dwarf evergreens, which had been removed for the summer, are planted in again—just to make the parterr's emptiness look less cheerless from the dining-room windows. Between these small evergreen bushes, in their season, will come up spikes of Hyacinths, of varied hue. I do not care for a whole bed of Hyacinths

or Tulips; they give me little real pleasure unless the colours be mixed. One chief charm of a garden, I think, depends on surprise. There is a kind of dulness in Tulips and Hyacinths, sorted, and coming up all one size and colour. I love to watch the close-folded Tulip bud, rising higher and higher daily—almost hourly—from its brown bed; and never to be quite certain of the colour that is to be, till one morning I find the rose, or golden, or ruby cup in all its finished beauty; perhaps not at all what was expected And then, amid these splendours, will suddenly appear one shorter or taller than he rest, of the purest, rarest white. How that white Tulip, coming as it were by chance, is valued! And so, again this year a mixed lot are planted. There was a time when we had only one Tulip in all the garden. I used to look for it regularly in a certain shady border under a Laburnum tree; an old-fashioned, dull, purple and white-striped flower, but it never failed to show, at the very end of every season. I had a regard for that Tulip, and last summer it was a disappointment vainly

to wait for its appearance in the accustomed spot. Many there were of its kind, surpassing it in loveliness; but then they were not the same.

Hyacinth beds will be a new thing here, but I doubt if they will make us quite so happy as has hitherto the unexpected advent of some stray pyramid of small odorous bells, pink, blue, or creamy-white, in out-of-the-way places about the garden. After their flowering is over, the pot-bulbs are always turned out somewhere in the borders. When a plant has lived with us for a time under the same roof, or even in the green-house, giving out for us its whole self of sweetness or of beauty, it seems so cruel that it should at last be thrown away as if worthless and forgotten! Some Narcissus that have had their day have just been put into a round bed on the further lawn, mixed with the "Mrs. Sinkins" white Pink; and there is a rim all round of double lilac Primroses. I have long wished to have plenty of that dear old neglected Primrose; so now we have a number of healthy roots from an old garden in Derbyshire. In the

centre of this bed is a very tall dead Cupressus, one of our few failures in transplantation last spring. A Cobæa, which was to have grown up quick and made a "bonnie green gown" for the poor bare tree, proved failure number two. It absolutely refused to grow, or do anything but look stunted and miserable, till one day, late in October, there it was running up the tree as fast as possible, clothing every twig with leaves and tendrils, and large, deep, bell-like blossoms! Its day must be short, however, at the wrong end of the year, and even now its bells are chilled to a greenish hue. A fine red climbing Rose on one side, and one of the old Blairii on the other, will make a kinder and more beautiful summer garment.

We have made a new Lavender border, and now I hope to have enough for the bees, and afterwards enough, when dried, to lay within the drawers and wardrobes, and give us "all the perfume of summer, when summer is gone;" enough, too, for pot-pourri, though we do not always make this fresh each year. It takes time, and there is so little time in these days! and often the

Roses are too wet, and the Lavender too scarce. The recipe we use is an old one: the paper is yellow, and the ink faded. But our best pot-pourri of these days comes not near the undying fragance of some Rose leaves—three generations old—that we still preserve in one or two old covered jars and bowls of Oriental porcelain. Along the south wall, an oblong bed is planted with dark purple Heartsease, and two more with yellow. There are six beds, and in the spring they will glow resplendently with a setting of Crocuses, white, yellow, and lilac; meanwhile a good layer of cocoa-nut fibre gives a look of comfort for the winter; and moreover, rather annoys the field-mice.

Under the Holly hedge, facing south, a narrow border has been made ready to receive a quantity of white Iris roots. The Holly hedge, planted for shelter and for pleasure, along a broad walk on one side of the carriage drive, is not in itself a success as yet. It was put in four years ago, but the trees were too old, I think; this year it is flushed all over with scarlet berries.

I am sorry to have to remove my beloved white Irises, but they have increased so enormously as to make some change necessary. Nearly twenty years ago I carried home from the south of France a few small roots in a green pitcher. For half that time they grew and multiplied on the sunny terraces of a sweet Somersetshire garden, and now for ten other years the same roots, transplanted here, have flourished, if possible, still more abundantly. It may be fancy only, but I think our white Irises might not have succeeded as they do, had they not been loved so well. Everybody has a favourite flower, I suppose—the white Iris is mine—the Fleur-de-lys of France—the lily of Florence. Nothing can be more refined and lovely than the thin, translucent petals. To see these flowers at their best, one must get up and go into the garden at five o'clock on some fine morning at the end of May. I did it once, and as I walked beside their shining rows in the clear daylight, I felt there were no such pearly shadows, nor any such strange purity in the whiteness of other flowers. We have

given away a great many, but I fear I am not altogether sorry that they do not seem always to succeed elsewhere as they do with us. I am trying to collect every different Iris I know of. We have now several which are very beautiful, and we should have more were it not that numbers die off after, perhaps, one short summer's loveliness. They dwindle and become sickly, and then altogether disappear. Almost our whole stock of one well-established kind—an old inhabitant of the garden—was destroyed by mice two seasons ago. The flower is bronze-brown, with a golden blaze in the middle. La Marquise (Iris Lurida ?), an old-fashioned dove-coloured sort, with purple frays on the falls, will grow anywhere. So will the large, broad-leaved, pale lilac kind, and the yellow Algerian. A little black wild Iris, that fringes the vineyard trenches about Florence, we have either lost or it will not flower. They call it here "La Vedova." I brought home some roots once from Bellosguardo, and we put them in where all the warmest rays of the south sun would find them. But only the long, narrow,

wild onion-like leaves appear—or, I fancy, they are the Vedova's leaves. Still I do not lose hope, but watch for it always when March comes round; and some day, somewhere, I think, my little "widow" is sure to surprise me The wild yellow Italian Tulip, that came with the Iris, succeeds here well. The patch of pale gold never fails, by the first week in April, to enliven the sunny side of a Yew hedge. A few untidy yellow blooms, supported on slender limp stalks, live there, just the same as in their own dear Italy. I stoop down to gather one, and for a moment the English garden is not there. . . . Before me lies a grassy vineyard path—there are the great open farm-sheds, full of sunlight and sunlit shade—and the pair of grey long-horned oxen, calmly waiting for the yoke. Near them, with her knitting, stands a patient sad-eyed woman, while happy children run down the path at play, or tie up bunches of yellow Tulips under the fig-trees. . . . Then there is a tall, white flag Iris, whose place is not yet fairly fixed. It is a handsome thing, and quite unlike the Fleur-de-lys. I think of mixing

it in with the yellow Flags and Osmunda Regalis beside the little watercourse. Last July, to watch the slow blooming of some Japanese Iris in the kitchen garden gave me intense delight. They grew tall and straight, with curiously ribbed leaves. The single flower at the top of each stem opened out very flat, with rounded petals, rich purple in colour, and measuring nearly seven inches across. One saw at once it was the purple flower the Prince, in the German fairy tale, found on the mountains, and carried off to disenchant his love with, in the old witch's cottage by the wood—only a large pearl lay in the centre of that flower. (There is no such thing as anachronism in fairy tales!)

We have gathered in our harvest of winter decorations for the hall and corridors. There is Pampas-grass with its silken plumes, and soft tassels of all kinds of downy German grasses, and Everlastings of all lovely shades of orange and red. They have hung in bunches head downwards in the vinery to dry for weeks past, and they will last for the next twelve months as fresh as they are

now. I have been told of a great bouquet of Everlasting Flowers, in a Dutch gentleman's drawing-room at the Cape, which was affirmed to be two hundred years old. We have sheaves of Honesty, also—"Money in your Pocket," as the poor say—which are to gleam like flakes of mother-o'-pearl in the firelight of December's dusky afternoons. We left plenty in the garden, however, where they will stand a good deal more of rough weather before they fall to pieces. Honesty is always handsome, in all stages of its growth; and like the people who take things easily, it thrives everywhere. With us it is quite at home in a damp north border, close under a line of Elms. All through June and July, the violet glow of a mass of it in full bloom made a brilliant effect; and now, in these November days, the ripe seed-vessels are transformed—their outer husk has shelled off, leaving only the silvery centre. The other day, in my early walk, just where the Allée Verte ends (no longer green, it is now a golden corridor, with, underfoot, crisp russet leaves), I seemed to come upon—not Wordsworth's host of

dancing Daffodils, but a company of spirits! The slanting sunbeams fell upon a clump of Honesty, and touched with fire every one of the myriad little silver moons. Though no wind stirred, they seemed to quiver with ghostly life in a shimmer of opal lights.

Nov. 18.—Winter is striding on, and every bit of colour in the garden becomes more precious than ever. Only a few days ago I made a nosegay of crimson summer Roses, a fine Auratum Lily, a Gladiolus, a Welsh Poppy, and a large red-rimmed annual Poppy, with a wonderful spray of Flexuosa Honeysuckle, that filled the room with its fragrance. A little while since, in one sheltered corner, Salvia Patens still held its own in unsullied blue. Marigolds were plenty; St. John's Wort must have made a mistake in its dates, for it was all over polished yellow buds ready to unclose; Mignonette and a few Sweet Peas lingered still. Here and there one came upon a white Snap-dragon or a flash of rose-red Phlox ("Farewell Summers" they call them in the West). It was impossible not to

admire the vigour and beauty of Primroses and Polyanthus of every colour. One only hopes this abundant autumnal bloom may not interfere with their blossoming in the sprin ; it is certainly finer than I ever remember in former seasons. A rockwork of big flints was quite gay with Virginian Stock and Primroses. To-day the frost is most severe. The Marigolds look unlike themselves, with a white cap border of frost, quilled round their orange faces ; the half-opened buds in a Tea Rose bed are like fancy Moss Roses ; only the moss is white, and every leaf is fringed with little sharp-pointed crystals. The China Rose tree by the green door in the wall is covered with pink roses, which I forgot to gather yesterday for my flower-glasses. This morning the frost has curiously changed them. The delicate petals are stiffened all through, as if they were turned into wax models, though their lovely pink is not dimned, and they smell as sweet as if nothing had happened. By this time our Irish Yews have resumed their wonted sadness. The berries are all carried off, and the blackbirds have fattened

so well on them, and on the bunches of grapes (left for their benefit on the house Vines), that they rise from the lawn quite heavily. I never saw such fat blackbirds! The seed of the Yew berries, which is believed to be the only poisonous part, is, I think, in most cases, left unswallowed; and in one little tree I found the remnants of an old nest filled with a compact mass of Yew seeds. The large blue titmouse carries off his berry to the Sumach tree, and there pecks off the pulp, holding it down with his foot. The larger thrushes are gone, I know not where; only one small bird, with richly spotted breast, is still seen about the grass, under the Stone Pine.

The Chrysanthemums in the greenhouse must have the last word. Nothing could be more beautiful than they are now, and have been for several weeks past. Some of the Japanese kinds are indescribably lovely; arrayed in tints that make one think of a sea-shell, or the clouds about an April sunrise. There is something, perhaps, in their delicious confusion of petals, that helps this wonderful effect of colour. The other sorts,

which are stiffer in arrangement, and more decided in colour, are to me somewhat less delightful. A tiny wren was among the Chrysanthemums this morning, noiselessly flitting in and out, like a little shade; evidently in a state of the highest enjoyment. No doubt I and the bird both took our pleasure with them—in different ways!

DECEMBER.

"Once a Dream did Weave a Shade." . .

"He who goeth into his garden to look for spiders and cobwebs will doubtless find them; but he who goes out to seek a flower may return to his house with one blooming in his bosom."

III.

DECEMBER.

Of Spiders' Webs, Christmas Roses, King Arthur, and the Tree I Love.

December 6.—Among the strange and beautiful sights of the garden during the hard hoar-frost that ushered in the first days of the month, not the least beautiful were the spiders' webs. Passing along the Larch Walk, the oak palings that divide us on that side from the new road (the old road, made by Richard, King of the Romans, in the thirteenth century, is now within the grounds) were hung all over with white rags—or so it seemed at first sight. And then, just for one second, that curious momentary likeness of like to unlike chanced. I remembered the street of palaces at Genoa, the day when I saw

it last; the grand old walls covered with fluttering rags of advertisements—yes, advertisements in English: "Singer's Sewing Machine." The white rags on our palings were spiders' webs both new and old, a marvellous number, thus crystallized, as it were, into existence by the frost, where scarcely one had been before. In open weather the webs are as good as invisible to human eyes; but now that frost had thickened the minutest threads to the size of Berlin wool—though in beauty of texture they resembled fine white velvet chenille—there was a sudden revelation of these wonderful works of art! One feels, if the nets show only half as large and thick to a fly's eye, the spider's trade must be a poor one. Here is a calculation that will probably interest nobody: 567 feet of pales over 5 feet high, and an average of 18 webs to every 9 feet. It may prove, however, something of the unsuspected multitude of spiders in a given area, though it is nothing to the acres of ploughed land that the level sun-ray of an autumn afternoon will show completely netted over with gossamer. Making the

most of a few minutes' inspection—for I should myself have frozen had I watched much longer these frozen webs—I could see but two varieties of work—the cobweb which usurped the corners, and the beautiful wheel-within-wheel net. In them all one might observe once more that ever-recurring stern immutability of the thing called Instinct. Here, for instance, are two sets of spiders living close neighbours for years together. Each set makes its snares on an opposite plan; and although they cannot help seeing each other's work continually, neither takes the least hint from the other. The plain cobweb is never made more intricate; the artist of the wheel never dreams that she might do her spinning to a simpler pattern. Happy people! They trouble not their heads about improvements; yet, on looking closer at the last-named webs, there seemed something of the faintest indication of a slight individuality; so far at least, that in a dozen nets there would be five or six worked within a square of four lines, while the remainder had five, tied rather carelessly in a knot below. Perhaps the variation

marks two distinct species; or it may be only accidental. Next day every visible trace of the strong beautiful webwork I had so admired was gone with the frost. The spider may have "spread her net abroad with cords" as usual, but there was no magician's wand to touch it.

The orchard ought to be very gay in the spring. Daffodils have been dropped in all over the turf, and a round patch dug round each Apple tree is to be filled with yellow Wallflowers. This is an experiment, and I do not feel sure that I shall like the flowers so well as the trees simply growing out of the grass. A change, however, is always pleasant; though, perhaps, one might hardly care to lay out the garden differently every year, as the Chinese are said to do. I had a dream, of the orchard grass enamelled with many-coloured Crocuses—in loving reminiscence of certain flowery Olive grounds I know; but after all, the imitation would have been as poor as a winter sky compared to the glowing blue of June. I am not without hope some day—that golden "some day"

which so seldom comes—to naturalize in our orchards the real *enamelling* of the Olive groves—that often-used phrase is too hard in sound and in its usual meaning to express the loveliness of those lilac star Anemones—with here and there a salmon-pink, or a fiery scarlet, blazing like a sun in the living green beneath the trees. I used to think nothing on this earth could come so near a vision of the star-strewn fields of Paradise.

In the north, or entrance court, we have been busy transplanting some large Apple trees that had overgrown their place, and setting free the trimmed Yews between which they grew. The blackness of these formal, cut Yews shows well against the old walls, which are covered with very aged Greengages and golden Drops. On the turf between each of the pyramid Yews, broad oblong beds have been made; in April we hope to plant them with pink China Roses, which are to grow very dwarf, and to flower the whole year through! The border round the Roses may be blue Nemophila; or perhaps the lovely Santolina Fragrans, with the soft grey foliage.

I think the "going in" to one's house should be as bright and cheerful as it is possible to make it. But how hard it is to brighten up a north aspect! ours has hitherto been far too gloomy. In the garden, the bed of Roman Roses is warmly matted over for the winter. This brave little red China Rose is one of my great favourites; it goes on flowering for ever! Even now, when the matting is raised a little bit, I can see buds and leaves and the red of opening blooms. I call it the Roman Rose chiefly because it grows at Florence; which is so very Irish, that I think there must have been some better reason now forgotten. The Rose hedges in the beautiful Boboli Gardens are crimsoned over with blossoms as early as the end of March; with us, however, it needs protection when planted in the open ground.

Under the east wall is our only Christmas Rose; it is a very large plant, and over it was built up, about a month ago, a little green bower of Spruce Fir branches. The shelter is to save the blooms from frost, which so often tarnishes their whiteness

with red. Almost daily, as I passed, I have peeped in to watch the cluster of white buds nestled snugly within. The buds have duly swelled and lifted one by one their heads, and now this morning our first bunch of perfect Christmas Roses has been gathered. This flower must, I think, be dear to every one with a heart for flowers. Its expression is so full of innocence and freshness—for it is not only human persons who have expression in their faces! and then the charm of its Myrtle-like stamens and clear-cut petals—snow-cold to the touch—and its pretty way of half-hiding among the dark leaves—always ready to be found when sought—and always with so many more blossoms than had been hoped for! To some, indeed, the associations bound up with the Christmas Rose—with even the sound of its name—may be dearer than all its outward loveliness; recalling, perhaps, the house and garden of their childhood, and happy Christmases of long ago; "the old familiar faces," and tones of the voices that are gone. I must here make the confession that last year, in my anxiety for the whitest possible of blossoms,

I had glass placed over the plant; and in spite of warnings, put matting over that; all which ended at Christmas in a fine show of green Roses! In the pits there are several of the smaller kind coming on in pots, which will soon be ready to cut. These are easy enough in their ways. But the Christmas Rose out in the border is a difficult thing to grow; full of quirks and fancies, and like a woman, hard to please. Once, however, it settles down in any spot, it will thrive there; and then will sooner die than take to a new place.

Dec. 13.—Our second white frost has vanished, and the grass appears again with a moist and pleasant smell. The forest of the Fantaisie is thinned, and the encircling Laurels trimmed. The whole took just half a winter's day to do. At the end of the turf walk, between the bushes and the golden Yews, peers out a Spindle tree, with its pink and scarlet fruit. The birds seem not to care for it, for the fruit is all there—untouched. I wonder if the name of Spindle comes from the unnatural thinness of the tree!

After these many years of working to a special end, we seem now to have almost reached it in one direction, for the garden looks well-nigh as green and furnished in winter as in summer—so far, at least, as the outline of verdure goes. The Yew hedges, and Pines, and perennial greens are at their best now, in mid-winter; they would even seem to have grown and thickened out since the summer died away. Watching the growth of these trees and hedges has been the delight and solace of many a troubled time, and one cannot but feel the most affectionate interest in them. In the centre of a triangular-shaped bit of lawn, surrounded by Conifers, we have placed a large stone vase on a square stone pedestal. The vase is old and grey, and had long stood in another place, where it made no show. The grey stone looks well against the warm greens that back it, and will look better when the season comes to fill it with bright summer flowers. The trees that stand around all wear a sort of charmed double life—at least to me—silently, fancifully.

It was at a time of sickness that the sleep-

less hours of the long winter nights came to be passed in spirit with the trees in the garden, and especially with half-a-dozen or so of our beautiful straight young Pines. Dare I tell the secret? They all became knights and ladies of King Arthur's Court! The great Wellingtonia standing a little apart is Arthur himself. The Nordmanniana, with its whorls of deepest green and strong upward shoot of fifteen inches in the year, is Sir Launcelot. The gold-green softly-feathered Douglas Fir, Sir Bedevere. The young Cedar of Lebanon, with fretted boughs of graceful downward sweep, Sir Agravaine. Sir Bors is a rounded solemn English Yew, of slow and steadfast growth. Sir Palomides—a fine pillar-shaped Thuia—towers between Sir Gawaine and Sir Gaheris, who are both clad in the wondrous green with almost metallic lustre of Cupressus Lawsoniana erecta viridis. These all stand round the triangular lawn, and amongst them comes, by some strange chance, St. Eulalie, a lovely Pine (*Abies Amabilis*), whose robe of grey-blue tufted foliage wraps her feet, and trails upon the grass.

Beyond, on the long lawn next "the park," stands Sir Tristram, the fine young Pinsapo; he all but perished in the frost of 1879-80, but now he seems to have drawn new strength and vigorous green from that nearly fatal conflict with his terrible enemy. On the house lawn, the Deodara, is the fairy Morgan-le-faye. Near her stood Sir La Cote-mal-taille, an ill-formed Lawsoniana; but he is now transplanted elsewhere. King Mark is a rather wretched ill-grown Cedrus, in summer almost hidden by Laburnums. Dame Bragwaine is a curious Cryptomeria Elegans; she has so many names (seven, at least, that I know of), and she takes such odd diverse disguises! once, loaded with heavy snow, she had to be supported by a stake, and took the semblance of a bear leaning on a ragged staff. In summer she is green, and in winter she wears a dress of purple brown; in rain or heavy dew she is spangled all over with diamonds and pearls. Queen Guinevere was never represented; no tree was found to fit her character. But near King Arthur and Sir Tristram, the two great Pampas tufts, still waving wintry plumes,

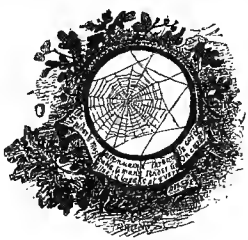
are "La Beale Isoude" and "Isoude les Blaunch Mains."

From our foolish garden-dreaming let us rest, and turn with a long look of revering love to the great Oak, that stands in his strength out in the park field, beyond the garden. On three sides round are lines of guardian Elms, in all their pride of delicate leafless intricacy; alone, amid the leafless ones, rises the Oak, wearing still his crown of brown, sere leaves. Smooth and straight grows up the giant stem, full twenty feet to the spring of the lowest branch. Two brother Oaks stand on either side. Their form is more rounded, more perfect; but high above them the great Oak uprears his head—unconcerned, and grandly branched, though shattered by every fierce west wind that blows. Every storm works some loss, but from the way each torn limb lies, you would say he had thrown it down in proud defiance. The wood-pigeons shelter among the summer leaves; the autumn ripens a rich store of acorns; and now, as I survey him from the terrace walk, or gaze upwards from the wet dead leaves beneath, through all the mystery

of his bare and spreading boughs, I think of Keats' stanza—

> "In a drear-nighted December,
> Too happy, happy tree,
> Thy branches ne'er remember
> Their green felicity;
> The North cannot undo them,
> With a sleety whistle through them,
> Nor frozen thawings glue them
> From budding at the prime."

The Oak is to my mind the tree of trees; and the destruction of its foliage, by insect ravages, that has year by year saddened so many parks and woods, has not come near us, I rejoice to say. Our few (there are but four or five) are safe as yet. I heard the gardener of one great place that had suffered much acknowledge as the cause the scarcity of birds.



JANUARY, 1883.

"To the Attentive Eye, each Moment of the Year has its own Beauty."—EMERSON.

IV.

JANUARY.

Of Field-Mice, and the Thorn of Joseph of Arimathea—Of "Poor Johnnys"—A Lilac Gem—and Greenhouse Flowers.

January 5, 1883.—A large body of the army of the small ones of the earth has attacked us, and it is no fault of theirs if we are not despoiled of the best of our spring delights. The field-mice have at length found out the Crocuses; we, on our side, have set traps in their way, and large numbers have fallen —quite flat, poor little things!—under the heavy bricks. We believe we should have slain many more, had not some clever creature made a practice of examining the traps during the night, devouring the cheese, and

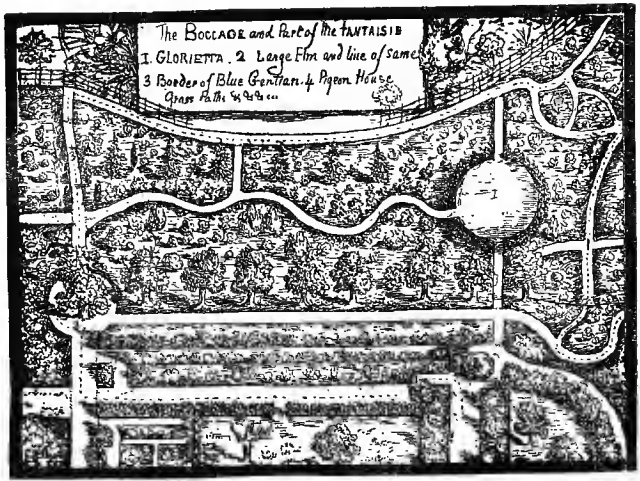
in some way withdrawing the bit of stick, so as to let the brick fall harmless. Suspicion points towards one person especially —the old white fox-terrier, who lives in the stables, and is master (in his own opinion) of all that department, and whom neither gates nor bars can prevent going anywhere he chooses to go. "Impossible!" says he, with Mirabeau; "don't mention that stupid word!" Up to this time field-mice have not troubled us much. In the days when there was always a hawk or two hovering over the ploughed land, or keeping watch over the green meadows, and when we used to hear the owls in the summer nights, and saw the white owl who lived somewhere near by sail silently in the grey of evening across the lawn—in those days we knew little of the plague of field-mice. But now we have changed all that; cheap gun licences have put a gun into every one's hand, the vermin is ruthlessly shot, and the balance of Nature is destroyed.

It is rather a fearful pleasure that we take just now to mark the unwonted earliness of green things of all kinds. One cannot help

dreading that some great check will happen later on in the year; and yet it may be an omen for good that the birds' full concert has only just begun, in these dark mornings, amongst the trees of the garden. The saying goes in Scotland, "If the birds pipe afore Christmas they'll greet after;" and so far as I know, not a note was sung till December 30. The birds served our Hollies a good turn at Christmas. In November the Hollies were scarlet with berries, and one thought with a shudder of how they would have to suffer, when the time came for Christmas decorations; then occurred two short severe frosts, and, to my joy, the Holly trees were swept clear of every tempting spot of scarlet before Christmas, and thus were saved the customary reckless breaking and tearing of branches. Dear birds! Does any one ever think, I wonder, sitting in the summer shade near "some moist, bird-haunted English lawn," how dull it would be without them—how much they enhance for us the grace and charm of the garden and the country? It is their gay light-heartedness that is so

delightful, and that we should miss so much if they were not there. Who ever saw a grave bird?—at least I mean a grave little one—the bigger the sadder it is, with them. Their very labours of nest-building, and of feeding their young ones, are done like a merry bit of child's play! The birds' never-failing interest in life is like a sort of tonic to those who love them. Michelet felt this when he called them "des êtres innocents, dont le mouvement, les voix, et les jeux, sont comme le sourire de la Création."

I do not remember having seen before in mid-winter a Hawthorn hedge bursting out into leaf! At the end of last month, however, there were strong young shoots and fully formed leaves on some of the Quicks in a hedge planted last spring in our lane. I have known nothing like this, except the Glastonbury Thorn. There is one of these strange Thorns, a large tree, growing just within the park gates of Marston Bigot, in Somersetshire. It used to bloom with great regularity in mild winters about this time. Tufts of flowers came all over the branches, smelling as sweet as Hawthorn in May. I


The Boccage and Part of the TANTALUS
1. GLORIETTA. 2 Large Elm and line of same
3 Borders of Blue Gentian. 4 Pigeon House
Grass Paths &c &c &c

have often cut a long spray all wreathed with pearly bloom, on New Year's Eve, in former years. The flowers come with scarce a sign of leaf about them, and they are rather smaller than those of the common May. The emerald green of turf, thickly sprinkled with Daisies, seems also an unusual sight for January. The first green glow on the grass and the first Daisy we are surely used to hail as signs of approaching spring. On the lawn, too, a yellow Buttercup, careless of the heavy roller, has dared to hold up its head!

Jan. 8.—The weather has been for many weeks so dark and gloomy, that the rare sunshine which shone upon the land to-day was as welcome and nearly as unlooked for as May flowers in January. The house stood blocked out in sun and shadow. Magnolia Grandiflora, which covers the south-east gable, looked grand in this flood of radiance. Standing before it, the refrain of a wild canzonetta I once heard, chanted forth lazily in the little sun-steeped piazza of an old Italian town, came back to the mind's ear—"Oh, splendid bella!" The eye, soon tired,

however, of so much dazzling brilliance in the polished foliage, each leaf reflecting back the sun, follows the ascending lines of beauty up above the pointed roofs, where the soft golden rust of the topmost leaves' inner lining meets the deep blue, cloudless sky. Next the Magnolia, just under the painting-room window, is a Flexuosa Honeysuckle which has not lost a leaf this winter. New shoots and twists of brightest green, set with young leaves two and two, are springing all over it. One tender shoot, indeed, has had the heart to curl twice round a branch, sending out a length of spray beyond.

Hard by the Flexuosa flourished once a fine Gum Cistus. To my sorrow, it perished in the frost of two winters back. The aroma of its gummy foliage, under the noontide sun, would penetrate deliciously through the open windows. We lost that winter all but one of our Gum Cistus, and their destruction was so universal that there was a difficulty in replacing them. I like the Gum Cistus best when growing upon the lawn. The snow of fallen petals on the grass seems right, and gives no sense of untidiness, there.

The loss of the Cistus, however, made room for better growth to the old Maiden's-blush Rose in the corner, by another window. She has hard work, anyhow, to hold her own against the flowery smothering of an Everlasting Pea, which persists in spreading beyond all bounds, notwithstanding the hints it yearly receives from knife and spade. Further on, still under the south front, a white Hepatica (Poor Johnny) is already shyly blooming. The root is sheltered by its own undecayed leaves; other plants of the same kind being quite bare. Hepaticas in England almost always look discontented, and this is no marvel to any who have seen them wild in their own place. I remember as clear as yesterday the oy of finding the blue Hepatica for the first time. It was in a narrow lovely valley at Mentone, on a mossy bank beside the little stony river. We were gathering Violets, which abound in that place; but on the edge of the bank, and over its steep side, intermingled with deep Moss and Ferns, there was another blue, which was not the blue of Violets. It was like the surprise

and wonder of a new world thus unawares to come upon such a flower—the beloved of childhood—in such rich profusion—a flower we had never seen before that happy day, save in rare scanty patches, in some damp garden border! About the same time I saw also both the pink and white Hepaticas, from the Pine woods on the slopes of the Alpes Maritimes. In a corner near the Hepaticas is a little patch of Violets with Bella Donna Lilies. The Lilies are sending up strong, healthy leaves, and that is about all they will ever do to please me. Fine, good roots were put in six years ago in this choice south corner, where I believed they could not but do well. But no; it is in vain I watch and hope!—not one of those exquisite "harmonies in ink" I so long to enjoy do they vouchsafe to give me. Possibly they may object to the society of the Violets!

Primroses have been with us more or less since September last, and now they are more abundant than ever—all colours—red, brown, yellow, white, sulphur: the garden is quite full of Primroses. Roses, also, we have scarcely been without all winter. Within

the walled garden there are real red Rose-buds, rather tightly closed up, but capable of opening any day. Many Rose-bushes have never lost their old leaves, and some are already putting forth new. On the top of the wall I perceived to-day a white spot —it was a Gloire de Dijon—looking very pale, but fully opened; and below it the Marcartney and an Apricot Tea Rose are in bud. A space of kitchen garden wall by the north iron gate is resplendent with Jasminum Nudiflorum, and close by, the bare branches of a Fig tree are already pointed with green, recalling in a dim way the Fig trees of the South, which in March glow like great branched candlesticks lighted up with flames of golden-green, in honour of the coming festa of spring. The Pyrus Japonica—a very old plant—has opened two coral cups. But the gem of the whole garden just now is a small, most delicately yet brilliantly tinted lilac Iris.* The contrast between it and the rich dark green of its reed-like leaves, amidst which the flower shines, is charming. It is only in the mildest of winters

* *Iris Ensata.*

that it ventures to appear. Last year the date of its blooming first was February 10. There are several tufts of foliage, but as yet only this one perfect flower, and we find rarely more than half-a-dozen in the season. In "the land of flowers," however, which I believe to be its own, the paths of many a Cypress and Ilex-shaded garden must be lined with lilac and green, at this very time. I often think how little use is made of that most poetical of colours, lilac—"lalock," as our grandmothers used to pronounce it. It was Schiller's favourite colour; but I hardly know of any one else particularly caring for it. Perhaps one reason may be, because it is so hard to mix the most lovely shades of lilac in painting, or in manufactured stuffs; and then it is so evanescent. Even Nature herself does not make use of lilac so freely as of other colours—yellow being, I almost think, her favourite. She has, however, hit the mark indeed in the colouring of my lilac gem; there is a sharpness in the flavour —so to speak—which makes it perfect. The dear little winter Aconite—each bud of pure clean yellow surrounded with its green frill

of leaves—appears here and there among the damp dead leaves. Snowdrops are showing daily whiter and larger above the ground, and all sorts of green peaceful spears are piercing in their strength, up through the black mould everywhere.

We have got through some rather important work within the past three weeks. A new Beech hedge has been planted on the open side of a green walk or close, already hedged in on one side. I once read somewhere of how it is reckoned good for the health to walk between Beech hedges, the air being purified and freshened by passing through the leaves. An old border, full of bulbs and Damask Roses, has been dug and rearranged. The Roses, which are old plants, will be refreshed and improved by the moving, and we shall add some day one or two York and Lancaster Roses. In this border the Grape Hyacinths have increased so rapidly that it is literally full of them, and we are planting them about in different places, some under the Deodara (Morgan-le-faye) on the lawn, with Snowdrops and Daffodils. The Deodara is in the

wrong place, and was spreading so much as to injure the effect of the Yew hedges. So, instead of cutting it down, it is trimmed up to eight feet or so from the grass; and for this act I have had to brave a perfect storm of adverse criticism! In a few months I hope the stem will be clothed with Virginia Creeper, which, when touched by Autumn's fiery finger, will become a pillar of flame, while wreaths of white Clematis (Virgin's Bower) are to light up the green in summer. Then we have been planting out four fine tree Pæonies on the turf by the entrance drive. In their season they will be as beautiful as great cabbage roses.

There have been two days of frost and bitter cold, and yet the impatient flowers are not discouraged. At the further end of the broad walk, down among the broken Fern and withered leaves, a sense of colour is felt in the border as one passes by. Omphalodes Verna (would that dear English names were possible!)* is wide awake, and little

* Since writing this, I learn that the English name is French Forget-me-not, and that it is a flower once beloved of Queen Marie Antoinette.

eyes of cœrulean blue are looking upwards. The Rock Roses are full of bud, and small variegated-leaved Periwinkles, on a low wall, already begin to tip their hanging sprays with stars of misty grey. But the strangest effort of all is a Foxglove spire of buds, rising well up from its leaf-crowned root on an ancient stump of Wistaria.

The mention of all these flowers would make it seem, I fear, as if our garden were even now a sort of flowery Paradise. The truth is a sad contrast to every such idea; for though the beautiful things are all in truth here, it would be difficult to describe the heavy gloom and damp of the whole place. And so one turns more often than usual to the greenhouse for consolation. Small as ours is—only about fifteen paces long—it is large enough for as much pleasure as I desire, under glass. To me the open garden is daily bread, the greenhouse "the honey that crowns the repast." There happens at this time to be a chord of colour there, worth noting—ivory whiteness of Roman Hyacinths, green of all exquisite gradations, pale yellow of Meg Merrilies

Chrysanthemums; others of a warmer yellow, and pure white; fairest pink of Primulas, and a deep purple note, struck once or twice, of Pleroma. What a flower that is! how charming in its way of blooming sideways on its stalk, to let the sun shine through its violet translucence!

FEBRUARY.

With the Trees of the Garden.

V.

FEBRUARY.

Land of Mandragora and the Serpent Flower.

"There never was a juster debt
Than what the dry do pay for wet;
Never a debt was paid more nigh
As what the wet do pay for dry!"

February 13.—If the West Country farmer's rhyme prove true this year, the "dry" will have a heavy debt to pay! Some of the gravel walks in the garden are quite green, along the sides where the almost ceaseless rain flows down. All our dressed stone—sun-dial, vases, steps—is discoloured and green, and will all have to be scrubbed with hot water and soap, like the rocks in

the great rockery once described in the *Gardener's Chronicle* (vol. xviii., p. 747). A large part of the grounds has been under water nearly all through the winter; the "wet," however, in which they sometimes stand ankle deep for weeks, seems not to do any harm to the evergreens here; whilst we get from the floods charming landscape effects. I could almost wish the glassy meres, with their clear reflections of tree or sky, to be permanent.

I have been looking over and making notes of our Fir trees—we have only about a dozen or so, I am afraid! I find that Pinus Austriaca thrives better than any other here; it is a regret to me that we did not plant numbers more of them, instead of wasting years in trying to make Scotch Fir succeed. Spruce never seems to do well in this part of the country; we have two or three old Spruce Firs which are mere poles, and some much younger, which must be cut down to relieve our eyes from that garden misery, a sickly tree. Only in the "Fantaisie" are our Spruce Firs successful, and there, from overcrowding —for there are at least ten—they are well-

nigh spoilt. This little spot has proved good for them, I imagine, because it was new ground, taken in from old unbroken pasture and well trenched. One or two others, full and healthy, of a few years' growth, suddenly went off last summer; it was as if a blighting wind had scorched their branches, or lightning had seared them. I know no successful Spruce plantations anywhere in the neighbourhood. The soil is gravelly, with chalk and flint; and sometimes trees seem to strike their roots down into a subsoil—perhaps an intermittent layer of greensand—and then they go off. But this can scarcely be the only cause that so fatally affects our Firs. About 120 miles down west, there is a group of extremely fine Spruce Firs that I have known for the last thirty years, and when I visited them last year I found they had all gone off in the same way as ours here. Excelsa Grandis flourishes equally with Pinus Austriaca. One fine young plant in the "Fantaisie" was, as one says, "quite a picture" in the summer for the perfect symmetry of its form, and on the two topmost laterals were just two beautifully shaped upright green

cones, crested with amber-coloured gum! I rejoiced in this young tree during all the season, but there is a fear since then that it may suffer in its growth from the premature effort. The Balm of Gilead Firs, a few of which we put in along one side of the turf walk, have failed entirely. I meant each to become a little rounded beauty, like that one planted by my father, which I remember long years since as a wonder of aromatic greenery; but these are grey and stunted, and they all wear such a look of age and decay as I fear we cannot long endure to see. The crisp leaves, however, are as sweet when crumpled in the hand as they ought to be. With two or three of these piteous little trees, the branches show, without losing stiffness, a certain tendency to droop or turn downwards at the extremities. It is rather curious, this droop, affected by a few individuals in a Fir plantation! For they do not begin life with that intention; the young tree may be just like any other for years, when suddenly one branch will be observed turned down, then another and another, till finally the whole thing is decided, and the tree becomes a

Fair Maids of February.

"weeper," as some call them. In a large plantation in Aberdeenshire, some years since, I knew one young Silver Fir out of all the others that grew itself into a drooping form, so that it seemed at last to draw down its branches close together as one would draw a cloak around one in the cold. It was then ten or twelve feet high, and now it must indeed be a remarkable object if it has grown and drooped at the same rate. Our Douglas Fir (Sir Bedivere) has known this temptation to droop, but evidently the feeling of the mass of his branches is dead against the idea, and it will come to nothing.

This accident or sport is common in other trees all over the world, I suppose, and one of the most ancient nomadic patterns of Persian rugs depicts, on either side the Tree of Life, the columnar Cypress and the drooping Cypress, beside a little tomb.

In various odd nooks and corners of the garden, I know where to find a few little old Cephalonian Pines, all that remain out of a number we once had. They are only about 4 or 5 feet high, yet they were grown

from seed over a quarter of a century ago. Like poor old useless retainers, they have followed the fortunes of the family, and we have become attached to one another. One amongst the original number became a fine specimen—and perished. The rest have never had a chance of growing up, for every spring their new buds are nipped, so they remain still the same, with a sort of look of old-young trees. I am especially interested in the welfare of one of the Cephalonians, who lives in an English Yew. Those two are certainly bosom friends! The Yew itself was only half a tree, spared, out of charity, on what seemed a bare chance of surviving. The Cephalonian stood near and shivered, and lost its buds every spring, while the Yew crept nearer and nearer, till at last its thick dark foliage reached the little Pine, and so grew on; and now the Yew fairly holds it within its warm, comfortable embrace. Some say, "What a mistake to leave them thus!" I say, "They shall not be parted;" so the two remain together, and grow quite happily in each other's arms. Oddly enough, the Pine seems to be

assimilating itself in colour, and partly in form, with the Yew, so that it is not easy to distinguish them. But if the Cephalonian at last out-tops its benefactor, what will happen then? At times the space of ground over which we reign seems to be very much too small; and I incline to envy the possession of land, with room enough to plant; for there can be no more engrossing interest of its kind than to watch the growth of trees, their manners and customs. I would plant at once acres of Ilex Oak. What shelter they would make! And in a congenial soil they would not be too slow of growth. There should be broad bands of Beech and Oak, and long groves of Larch, delicious in spring for the fragrance of their green and pink-tipped tassels. And there should be plantations of Fir—Scotch Fir, for the delight of their healthy blue-green in youth, and for the glory of their great red stems in age; and Spruce Fir, with all their charm of deep mosses underneath, and the loveliness in spring of starry Winter-green (*Trientalis Europæ*) and "the rathe Primrose;" and for the music of the winds among their

branches, and the velvet darkness of their colour under summer skies. (*Mem.*—The Winter-green would have to be sent us from the North.)

Our great work of last month has been an alteration at the east end of the garden. A Quickset hedge, forty or fifty years old, is moved back, so as to take in from "the park" a bit of waste ground; the gravel path that ran under the hedge is widened, and a block of Laurels cut through. By this means a turf way, leading north and south, is made to enter the improved walk, whose chief attraction is the border of old damask Roses. Plum trees and Pears stand along the border amongst the Roses, and a large perennial yellow Lupin, in which thrushes have been known to make their nests. In the middle of the hedge grew a fine young Elder. I had long promised that Elder it should never be cut down, so when the Hawthorns were removed the tree remained, arching across the path to meet a Plum tree on the other side. An Elder in full bloom is such a beautiful thing that it is painful to feel obliged to destroy it; but Elders have such

an unfortunate knack of appearing where they are not wanted! The birds sow Elder seeds in the clefts of trees, in chinks of walls, flower borders—all sorts of inconvenient places—now that the berries are no longer requisitioned to make Elder wine. In old-fashioned days it was worth having a cold, to enjoy a night-cap of Elder wine from the saucepan on the hob! So this one tree is preserved in honour, as compensation for those others which are no more. I am not in the least superstitious, but it *is* rather uncanny to cut down an old Elder! Eldritch legends and spells have clung to the tree in days of yore, and have even come down to our own times. I used to listen at my mother's knee, and beg again and again for the story of the fairy changeling. The interest of the story never failed, and the rhyme never tired, about the enchanted hare, who ran—

> "Runie and runie the Eildon tree,
> And seven times runie the Eildon tree."

According to custom, I was rather on the look-out for treasures when the old hedge

was dug up, but nothing appeared excepting a huge yellow bone and a gigantic root of White Briony. The uncouth thing bore a strange resemblance to some organized being with arms and legs—something like an octopus in full swim, only twenty times as big, and yet also with a sort of human aspect! I was told it was a Mandrake (though it did not shriek on being pulled up), and so I desired it should be carefully buried, in order that the household might not be disturbed by its groans at night. In India the sounds emitted by a Mandrake in the dark night are said to be sometimes heartrending. And so the witch, in the *Masque of Queens*—

> "I last night lay all alone
> O' the ground to heare the mandrake grone."

I wonder if White Briony is really the true Mandrake, about which there must seriously be something mysterious. I find in the dictionary, "Mandragora (Mandrake), a powerful soporific. Mandrage, a plant said to be so called because it points out that a cave is near." I know no more, besides the wild traditions, and this vision the other day,

in the twilight, of a white misshapen figure lying on the earth. There are, however, few things more exquisitely graceful than the Black and White Brionies. Black Briony is rare in our part of Buckinghamshire. In this garden three White Brionies have leave to dwell. All winter, the mystic root lies hidden, awaiting the appointed time. On a day in spring or early summer, suddenly up-springs a group of delicate pale green stalks, and they, as soon as they have seen the sun in heaven, delay not to put forth all the strength stored under the earth in the big ugly root; and before many days the green stalks have grown into a beautiful leafy plant, mantling over whatever is nearest of tree or bush, with leaves of most fanciful cut, and a thousand ringlets of circling, sensitive tendrils. By-and-by there will be a whole firmament of little star-like flowers, greenish-white in colour—all either male or female, according to the plant. In October an unhappy collapse sets in. Life ebbs fast from the flaccid stalks and tendrils, dying away, sinking down, down into the buried root, till nothing remains but a dry colourless shroud,

clinging close over the supporting shrub, which scarce can breathe, till a friendly hand in due course clears the whole thing off.

I think I never saw a finer show of white Arums than we have just now. There is the grandest luxuriance of foliage, with thick tall stems, crowned by spathes in spiral lines of perfect grace. The rich texture of these flowers is marvellous; white as the drifted snow, with a lemon scent. Our success is perhaps due, not only to good management, but to what one may call imported bulbs. Four years ago they were thrown out of a garden at Cannes, as worthless rubbish, on to the road-side. I passed that way one day, while a little peasant girl was collecting some of these bulbs in her pinafore. I asked her what they were. "*Des lis!*" she said. So I immediately gathered up some for myself, and they were done up in newspapers and packed in our trunks and brought home. In grim contrast to these joyous flowers of light is the Serpent Flower, a tropical member of the Arum family. I saw it, once only, eleven years ago, in the beautiful garden of

Palazzo Orenga, at Mortola, near Ventimiglia. It grew on the edge of a ravine, under the deep shade of a low stone wall. Right up from a cluster of black-spotted leaves the centre spiral rose to about ten or twelve inches, bending over at the top into a sort of hood, like the hooded head of a cobra. The creature—flower I cannot say—took the attitude exactly of a snake preparing to spring, the body marked and spotted the same as a snake, with the hood greyish-brown. The whole thing seemed something more than a good imitation only of the reptile whose name it bears. The first glance gave a sort of shock, as if on a sudden one had become aware of the actual presence at one's feet of a deadly serpent; and yet the terrifying object is, I believe, used by the Indians as an antidote to snake-bite.

All over the Olive grounds of the same country where the Serpent Arum is acclimatized, about this time or early in March, appear the little brown "Sporacci"—tiny hooded Arums of quaint form, little odd monks with yellow tongues hanging out (Arum Arisarum). My window is full of Paper

Narcissus—Narcissus is Remembrance; and for the sake of past days, I love it—they succeed a set of blue Roman Hyacinths, dear also from association, and beautiful in their full tones of blue and green. The perfume of both flowers brings back vividly the sweet South, where I knew them wild. I must end with a little bit out of a letter sent me from that southern land which has the power to create lovers of Nature:—

"I am longing for sunshine, to bring to life all the flowers I am watching for near the torrent beds. My ignorance of flowers has this advantage, that each leaf is a mystery to me, and I know not what flower it frames, so each will be a surprise as it appears."

MARCH.

"Out of the Snow, the Snowdrop—
Out of Death comes Life." . . .

DAVID GRAY.

VI.

MARCH.

Of Rooks, and the Close of Day—Of Fairy Garlands, Snowdrops, and Wild Ivy.

March 9.—We are rejoicing in the fulfilment of a long-felt wish, and at last we possess a rookery! There are the nests, seven of them, in the Elms, in full view of our east windows. The grand old trees have always seemed to us a most tempting position for the rooks, who themselves have half thought so too. But it has taken them long to come to a decision. On many a spring morning for these eleven years past have we observed them settling upon the trees in hundreds. But after a short interval

of noise and clamour, they would rise and depart. They were only coquetting a little with us, or bent on kindling delusive hopes. "Ill blows the wind that profits nobody," however; so the storm of April 29 last year, which uprooted some of our best trees, laid low also part of a neighbouring rookery. The shock seems to have decided the rooks, and to have won their confidence in our noble 300-year-old Elms. The seven nests were begun and nearly built in about as many days. How busy the old rooks are! And how, with no hands and only one beak, they can make up those neat bundles of moss and dry grass, just like potatoes, that we see them carrying to line the nests with, is difficult to understand. During the rough snowy weather no work was done; but a rook or two sat all day just above the nests on the very topmost twigs, swaying in the wind, as if to watch and test their security. One evening at dusk, after the rooks had gone off for the night, an inquisitive starling came peeping about. He flew up from his own lower range, visiting every nest; made a minute inspection inside and out, and then

decamped in a great hurry, afraid of being found out.

Near the great Elms, but far below the new black colony, is the dovecote. Beautiful white fantail pigeons, varied by two or three purple-necked greys, here live joyous lives. On the steep, heather-thatched roof they preen, and coo, and make love together, or rise with sudden dash into the air, and wheel in circling flight over the lawns and flower-beds. On sunny days, when they pass and repass the house, swift gleams flash along the rooms within; brown oak panellings reflecting back the sunshine from their silver plumes. Often, through long summer afternoons, will these bright shadows come and go upon the walls, like visions of happy ghosts upon the wing. It is not all poetry, however, with our fantails, I am afraid; for the handsomest of them all choked himself with too greedily swallowing a slug one day, and was found stretched dead upon the lawn. Sometimes a poor tailless fugitive, escaped from the nearest public-house shooting-match, will take refuge with our pigeons and feed shyly with them for a day or

so; but only one ever remained, and she went to live with the bantam cock, whose pert little wife had deserted him.

The day has been cold, with scattered flakes of snow falling; and now, in the grey still evening, the air is suffused with a certain splendid sobriety of colouring, if it may be so described. The turf has lost that living green it showed a month ago, for since then bitter winds have swept the garden; the Yews look dark and sombre, dark pyramids and lines; the older Yews, of large and natural growth, are powdered over with dim gold-dust. Such profuse bloom on the Yews seems to soften their blackness. Beyond the Yew hedges' dusky outline glows a richer green of Laurel, Cedar, and Firs, with the russet sheen of Beech, half seen between the budding fulness of Thorn and Laburnum. Beyond all stand the Elms; they form a background of infinite delicacy, purpling under that nameless change, more felt than seen, which the turn of the year has brought. Nearer home, in this pale evening light, the hoary old garden walls, with here and there a ruddier tint of redder brick, or faintest

blush upon them of Pyrus Japonica, join their mellow tones to the intense but quiet colour of the hour. A mass of common sweet-scented white Clematis, whose summer glory has long since melted into a softly shaded cloud of thin withered stalks, hides one pillar of the central iron gate, and half enwreathes a sculptured vase above; sere leaves of grassy wild things break the straight line of mossy, lichened coping. Timid thrushes with spotted breast, and little hedge-sparrows in sober brown, appear upon the lawn, since labour for the day is done and the garden is deserted. A tomtit, quaintly liveried, has made the square-topped Yewen hedge his hunting-ground. (Yewen was the pretty old word in Spenser's time: may we not revive it?) But now a bold gay blackbird leaps up upon the stone ball that surmounts the ivied corner of the wall. His jet-black plumage and "the golden dagger of his bill" give just that touch of strength wanted to complete the consonance of lovely colour. By-and-by he will be down again upon the grass to flirt his tail and flout the thrushes till he remains

alone, master of the field. This is a dull time for the cock birds all over the place. Awhile ago they had such games of an evening on the lawn! chasing each other in and out between the Yews and Box tree, and every blackbird had two hens to play hide and seek with. But now the lawful wives are sitting, and there's an end of the fun.

The garden has been cold and joyless ever since March 4. It is true that morning after morning, about sunrise, a treat for the eye has been prepared by the Crocus beds with a succession of white frosts, but it is one could well be spared. Meanwhile, it certainly is the prettiest sight imaginable, these Crocuses thrown lightly, as it were, upon the frosted turf in garlands of amethyst and amber. The rime, covering up all varied greens and browns of earth and grass with a veil of pearly grey, gives a most pure and charming result. If you look quite near—at the purple wreath especially—the flowers seem all dipped in pounded sugar, crystallized for a fairy's feast. Except this pretty morning show, there is as yet but little joy. Fewer flowers than in January even, and such as

are willing to bloom cast down on the ground. Primroses and the earliest Daffodils are thus laid low, conquered by overmastering cold. Violets, too, which before the frost began were almost more perfumed and of finer bloom than ever I remember, are pinched and shrunken. Snowdrops also failed, before the severe frost, destroyed untimely by excessive rain. The Snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*) appeared earlier than usual, and I look forward to the summer Snowflake later on. These lovely flowers came from an eyot on the Thames, where they grow wild. A fine double Snowdrop played an amusing little freak. The southern face of a Yew hedge under which it grew had, I suppose, gradually overgrown the plant, so its stalks had to preternaturally lengthen themselves, growing up within the hedge till forth peeped the flowers from various little interspaces, as if the Yew itself were breaking out into Snowdrops! One of these long stems measured sixteen inches, and the blossoms, larger than common, looked as if they enjoyed the joke.

Few indeed are the flowers to be recorded

in bloom. There is a pink tuft or two of Dog's-tooth Violet (long lines of these, if there were space sufficient, would make great show). Grape Hyacinths (looking very unripe) are an inch or so above-ground. The sweet little dwarf Daffodil, with bent head, smiles to itself in the accustomed place. A few Polyanthuses, small blue Periwinkles, mixed with yellow Primroses; Pulmonaria, seared and pinched; blue Scilla, in niggard clumps, quite unlike its usual bounteous, radiant beauty. These, with bushes of rosy Ribes, checked but ready to break into bloom, are about all we can boast. There are, indeed, the Crocuses, whose best days, however, will soon be ended. The mixed border of these, in three colours—yellow, white, and lilac—would have been perfect had our friends the field-mice, instead of choosing the lilac alone for their own private consumption, shown more impartiality. Their taste is certainly remarkable, for the yellow were the fattest bulbs.

Mar. 19.—After a day of rain it is wonderful how quickly Daffodils and Primroses have

picked themselves up. The Grape Hyacinths have grown two inches since morning, and begun to colour in proportion, or so at least it seems; and tiny golden buds, unperceived before, burgeon all over the Kerria. Although Daffodils as yet are few, there is already a Polyanthus Narcissus unfolded, and a few Narcissus of deep orange-yellow have arisen behind the lilac winter Irises. The Apricot bloom is chiefly brown, but all will not be lost. On the Peach trees there are buds, and some expanded blooms of heavenly pink. I find a curious small deception has been practised upon me by a plant in the east border. I had often observed two patches of greenish worn-out-looking moss there, and at last inquired of the Gardener the reason of their being permitted. He pointed out that it was not moss, but the green bare roots of a Violet, which I am well acquainted with when its disguise is thrown off. It is a pied Dog Violet, from Villa Clara, Baveno. We have had it now for some years. The flower is scentless, striped white and purple, of large size, on a long stalk. But flower and leaf are yet a long way off.

The pruning and trimming of all the Ivy walls and festoons have been done. The result for the time is as ugly as it is desirable. Ivy grows so lavishly here that it has to be kept well in hand, and many whom it favours less have said they envied us our Ivy. More than once we have had to choose between some tree or a canopy of Ivy. It is like a beautiful carpet underneath a long row of Elms, where nothing else would grow; indeed, wherever there happen to be bits too overshadowed for grass or otherwise unsatisfactory, we put in Ivy; it is sure to understand, and to do what is required. My favourite sort is the wild English Ivy, and no other has a right to grow on the house. Its growth is slow and sure; it always grows to beauty, and never to over-richness. The loveliness of its younger shoots and of the deeply cut leaves might inspire either poet or painter! To either I would say, Wherever on your tree, or fence, or house-wall you find it beginning to spring, cherish it; for years it will do no harm, and if you are true to your art, and therefore know that small things are

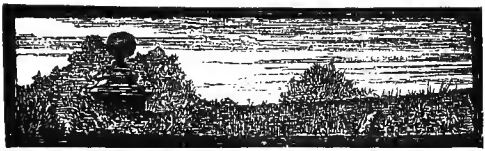
not too small for you, it will repay your love a hundredfold. Wild Ivy is best where it comes up of itself; it clings then so close and flat. A thrush sat on her nest, built on quite the outside of a Holly, two feet from the ground, while the men were at work pruning an Ivy wall—large swathes of Ivy falling close to her. She had faith in us, and never feared.

Our grove of white Arums in the greenhouse is still a fine sight—plants from four to five feet high, with enormous leaves. The spathes, however, though fine, are less so than at first, when many of them measured over eight inches across. The Maréchal Niel Rose will not give us this season anything like the six hundred great yellow roses we have had from him these last three years. He seems to be failing a little, somehow. But every morning I have a foretaste of summer in the glowing heap of beautiful roses of several kinds, brought in to me before breakfast. And with them there are Gloxinias, marvellous in their size and splendour of deep colouring. They are succeeding a lot of most curious-

looking Tydæas—orange and dusky pink, profusely spotted. Both these flowers surprise one by the length of time they remain fresh when cut.

APRIL.

"To the Wise a Fact is True Poetry, and the most Beautiful of Fables."—EMERSON.



VII.

APRIL.

Of Daffodils—Coltsfoot—An Archangel—Gold Wrens and the little Vedova.

April 9.—The garden is full of Daffodils. Yellow flowers and green leaves form a most beautiful combination of colours when laid on by Nature's hand. Every part of the garden now has its show of single or double Daffodils, and yet there is not one too many. Lovely always, they are loveliest, perhaps, when growing in the grass. There, "the green world they live in" shows them off better than when surrounded by garden mould. Excepting one large single flowering plant under the east wall, our finest Daffodils grow in the cool north border.

One thinks of "Enid" in her faded silk, like a blossom "that lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath" when the Daffodils appear. Indeed, one can scarcely look on them, in their beauty, without recalling the lines of some familiar quotation; mine shall only be from the children's nursery song-book—

> "Daffy-down-dilly has come up to town
> In a yellow petticoat and a green gown."

(Poor Daffodilla! for yellow is jealousy, and green is forsaken.) The old jingle paints well enough the Daffodil's outside. Whatever else may lie within the golden depth of her cup and about her silken petals, all the poetry of the Daffodil has been said and sung from old, old days, up to our own time, by those happy few whose thoughts shape themselves in verse. Soon there will be a blooming of many varieties in the garden, but at this moment only three abound, and of these I hardly know which most to praise. There is the single variety, with rather narrow, almost pointed petals, and trumpet tube of a deeper shade of yellow; I cannot distinguish this one from Narcissus Incomparabilis of

the Riviera. Then there is the semi-double (old Parkinson's Narcissus Major, "confined to the gardens of the curious"), which I sometimes think a still more handsome flower, from its rich folded depths of colour. Its prime, however, lasts but a few days; the full tube seems then to overspread and split, and a confusion of doubleness ensues which mars its perfect form. Then there is the old real Daffodil—quite apart from the so-called Lent Lily—with very pale, broad-leaved corolla, and true Narcissus-shaped cup. When this doubles itself there is again a loss of grace. I call it the real Daffodil, because years ago, when that was a flower not thought so much of, this, as I remember, was the usual kind seen in gardens. I believe in those days the Daffodil —whose very name is music in our ears —was considered almost a vulgar (!) flower; "it was so very common." Now it is so common in another way, one could half wish that it—with the Sunflower—had remained undiscovered, or only bloomed to grace old cottage garden plots, or as the Lent Lily, in wild woodland ways, for the

delight of simple village children. Is it fault or failing in human nature that inclines us to turn from things that all the world admires? I only know that, somehow, one loves one's own love to be for one's self alone! and I do not care to see cartfuls of Daffodils sent up to London. . . . There is a part of the garden on the north side which just now gives me strange pleasure. There we leave the borders to grow pretty much how they will. In summer on one side there is a green forest of Male-Fern, Bramble, wild Ivy, and low-grown Berberis; but at this time the scene is different. Great double Daffodils rest their golden heads upon interlacing red-brown Fern and branching glossy Berberis. A few shafts of narrow blue-green leaves pierce through and amongst the brown and burnt-sienna colour; Pulmonaria—taking heart after all the withering frosts—breaks into clouds of flower, all blue and pink, with dusks of mottled leaf between. And among the Pulmonaria crops up by chance, in the humblest way, a healthy beautiful Archangel, or Dead Nettle, set with blossoms downy white.

"More springs in the garden than the gardener ever sowed," is an old saying. Just the other side the walk there chances—who knows how?—a charming little plant which curiously attracts me. Unlike "the small Celandine," it never had a poet, so far as I know, to sing its praise, although the Painter-poet of England—William Blake—disdained not to immortalize it. In his illustrations to the Book of Job it occurs, the character of the flowers unmistakably given by a few master-touches. Yet this little Coltsfoot is full of interest, and the little satiny sun-flower that crowns each pinkish fleshy flower-stalk is, in its way, quaintly unique. The *specimen* (*vide* Dryasdust) in our north border has rooted partly under and amongst the lowest leaves of an Aucuba, partly in the Box edging. I think it has been in a vague way not unknown to me for many past seasons, but I have passed it unobservantly, only perhaps remarking to myself, "Ah, there you are again!" One day, however, it drew down my attention to look more closely, and since, it has had sometimes half-a-dozen visits in the day. I wished to

see if there were any set hours for its unfolding and closing; it seemed so odd to find the little flowers fast shut at near 8 a.m., with the sunshine bright upon them. Then I found they did not open till between 11 and 12 mid-day. One placed in water, at a south window, opened itself wide before nine in the morning, and at noon the small yellow disc was spread so broad that its rays turned over the other way at the edges. You could scarcely find on any flower's face an expression of more serene content. Then both the growing flowers and the one in the window began to close at precisely the same time—about ten minutes to 4 p.m.; and the closing process with both only came to an end at near 6. This slowness may have been, perhaps, because the flowers were then all rather past their first youth. In grey cloudy weather they hardly unclosed at all. The spot where this Coltsfoot has chosen to grow must be unsympathetic, for after the early morning a light chequered shade of Holly, from over the way, veils in some degree its coveted sun supply. When its time comes the little flower dies very prettily; it only

changes to a dull saffron hue, and then shuts up for ever.

The all too brief delight of hearing the birds sing in the evening is not at its best; about seven they begin. The other day, at 6.30, scarce a note was heard through all the garden. The rooks were cawing in a whisper their hoarse good-nights; two wood-pigeons answered each other from trees far apart in the fields, with an interrupted chant—"slow to begin and never ending." Suddenly, a little before seven—about three minutes before—one after another the thrushes awoke into song. The whole air echoed and resounded with their music. It was the same time, precisely, as on the day before. How do they tell the hour thus to a minute? Not certainly by the clock; for seven struck from the village church tower just three minutes after the concert began. Can it be the first star appearing that sets for them the moment to begin? Looking up, the pole star shone from heaven right overhead. Does some "wise thrush," sitting on a topmost branch, with full bright orbs turned heavenwards, mark this sudden diamond in the sky,

and then at once pour forth his flood of liquid melody, the signal for his fellows waiting round to take up the song? We watched near the Douglas Fir, I and the satin-coated colley dog; he listened too, lying on the grass, rather bored but patient, with ears alert; and twilight deepened, and star after star stole out upon the dusk, while the orange west grew dim and changed, and louder still re-echoed the ecstatic numbers from every bush and tree, and from many a hedgerow in the fields beyond. In all this multitude of bird voices not a discord intervenes; it is an orchestra turned to one key, and the fuller the tones of the unnumbered instruments, the deeper and more entire is the concord. How is it done? There is no conductor with his baton! . . . But the dinner-bell rings, and we must leave the concert and all its sweet-throated minstrels in full song, and the garden, with its refined and lovely influences of perfect harmony, its budding trees and tuneful thickets of Fir and Laurel, to the Daffodils and the stars. The contrast is somewhat gross, of roast mutton and lighted lamps! . . . But to those

who prefer their Currant bushes to the songs of "God's poet hid in foliage green," what can be said? I do not believe such persons exist.

The Sweet Briar hedge along the walk leading to the wicket-gate in the entrance-drive begins to scent the air. We do not make enough of such a treasure as Sweet Briar is. Some day we must plant some near the windows, for pleasant perfume after rain. It is a favourite idea, too obscure to be a doctrine or even a theory, that the sweet smells of flowers, and aromatic leaves, and all kinds of green things have a certain virtue for different conditions of health. Here are a few examples, and I am afraid I do not know many more: To smell wild Thyme will renew the spirits and vital energy in long walks under an August sun. The pure, almost pungent scent of Tea Rose Maréchal Niel is sometimes invigorating in any lowness of mind or body. Sweet Briar promotes cheerfulness. Yellow Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Cowslip, Wallflower, Damask and pink China Roses, Plum blossom, and notably Sweet Gale or Bog Myrtle,

and wild white Honeysuckle refresh the spirits; while the smell of ground Ivy, Charlock, Woodruff, Rosemary, and fresh-cut grass seems to be a refreshment to the body. Hawthorn is very doubtful, and Lime blossom is dreamy. These scents are "transparent," and are also, except the two first, more or less uncertain, to be caught on the wing, as it were. The more positive and "opaque" scents, such as those of the Gardenia, Lilies, Narcissus, Jonquil, etc., seem less potent for the spirits than for the body. The subject is full of indistinctness, since that which is life to one may be death to many. I have known an instance of even white Sweet Peas and white Pink being unendurable, and yet both are what I call "transparent." There may also be a system of mixed flowers. Small scarlet Nasturtium and lemon-scented Pelargonium are good together, and seem to have a pleasant effect on the mind, and as the venerable Parkinson says, they "make a delicate Tussimussie, or Nosegay, both for sight and scent." The large Italian white Jasmine, mixed with Marie Louise Violets, is comforting. Alto-

gether I think the idea may be something more than a mere fantastic whim.*

April 17.—This morning, before 8 o'clock, the whole garden felt like spring. The turf was brightly green and shining with dew, and birds, and grass, and flowers were unconsciously at ease and happy for the moment under the warm sunlight. The unwonted warmth made a robin so bold and confident, that he flew up against me in the most playful way, and then perched on a young Beech, flapping his little wings with a merry twinkle in his eye. All about and in and out the Stone Pine, to them one huge world of insect life, flitted a pair of golden crested wrens, as busy as possible,

* Nearly twelve months after writing thus about healthful Flower-scents, I found in Austen's "Treatise of Fruit-trees," 1657, a curious confirmation of my idea, which appears, indeed, to be an old one. He writes, "Health is preserved by pleasant and wholesome Odors, and perfumes found in the garden of Fruit-trees, . . . from the blossomes of *all the Fruit-trees*, . . . which are not simply Healthfull, but are accompted cordiall; chearing and refreshing the heart and vitall spirits."—*Note, April*, 1884.

the flutter of their tiny wings making just as much sound as might two butterflies. The sun glanced now and then, for a moment, on the cock-bird's golden streak, the hen held a filmy white insect of some kind in her bill, and would on no account show the way to her nest, so long as she was watched. It was unkind, I fear, to tease so minute a creature, and I soon went another way; and then both wrens made a little rush into the brambly ivy-smothered trunk of the tree. We refrain from too curiously searching for the nest, though I think the young family would be worth seeing! In the morning light a host of single Daffodils shone like pale gold; double white Wind-flowers have begun to bloom (there grows a yellow wild one * not far from us, but I have only seen it after it had been transplanted into a garden), and many kinds of Narcissus. The Pasque-flower has been put out of its reckoning by the unusually early Easter; it is only just

* Anemone Ranunculoides is alluded to. The gardener of the garden where I saw it assured me it grew wild in a little wood close by, but I did not myself see it wild.

in bud. The grass walk in the Fantaisie was too heavy with dew to be pleasant, so I only looked across the gate at the Narcissus and flaming star Anemones. In the clear sunlight, lilac patches of Aubrietia, side by side with clean white Arabis, seem doubly charming.

How eagerly one seizes all possible points of beauty in such a severe trying season! I never before remember our having to water the garden in April; it has been, however, quite necessary, for as yet only two slight April showers have fallen, and the clumps of Narcissus Poeticus were failing. Tulips are flowering with stalks barely one inch long, and Crown Imperials half miss their usual "stately beautifulness." One day of soft warm rain would set all right, and give us an almost Roman spring, so suddenly would the garden become clothed in bloom, and the leaves burst out upon the trees. King-cups begin to glass themselves in our narrow watercourse, and reeds to thicken greenly along the brink. The long line of Primroses along the *Allée Verte* is a sad failure. As soon as the flowers open they are beheaded by

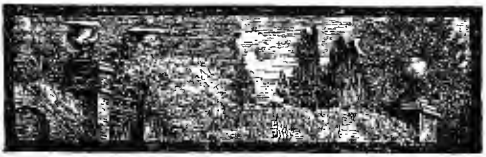
those cruel chaffinches. This is how the little painted traitors behave all the while they are supposed to be gaily building their dainty nests! Such wholesale execution is, I believe, the result of this very dry weather. They cut off the flowers to get at the small drop of moisture or honey in the calyx. I forgive the chaffinches without any difficulty, only wishing that other people could be as easily pardoned; but when the rooks are poisoned and our new hopes of a rookery nearly frustrated, it is hard to be very forgiving! Some short-sighted farmer has done this cruel deed. The poor rooks dropped on our own land on the grass under their nests. Several of their young must have perished miserably, and the deserted nests look very sad. Still we think enough young remain to save the rookery. The Florentine yellow Tulips are in bloom. How far more lovely to the unhorticultural eye are these wild kinds, with their graceful bending stalks, than those the Tulip's cultivation has so well succeeded in stiffening—with all their grand colour! On the 7th appeared, as I knew she would sooner or

later, the little "Vedova" Iris of Florence. Under the south wall, where we did not think to seek, there she was, for the first time after these eight years' seclusion. And still she wears her weeds of green and black. The roots have increased and thrown up quantities of leaves. These leaves are not rounded like those of the Spanish Iris and other long narrow kinds; they are four-sided, with sharp angles, very strong, and have a sharp point at the end.

MAY.

"Pale crocuses have come before her;
Wild birds her welcome sing;
Ten thousand loving hearts adore her,
The grey world's darling, Spring."

W. M. ELTON.



VIII.

MAY.

Of Cherry Blossoms—the Nightingale's "Melodious Noise"—Of Broken Stones, etc., etc., etc.

May 6.—The month of May would be Heaven upon earth if only it came in August or September, when summer mostly begins! but such cold, hard weather as we have had spoils sadly our enjoyment of the blossom trees and all the pleasures of spring. There have been just one or two sweet days, when the white Cherry orchards shone softly against a sky of serenest blue; days when we did but revel in the joyous present, forgetting quite that ever it could be that "rough winds do shake the darling buds of May." Alas! all too soon our dream is

dispelled; dark clouds arise, and we see "Heaven's gold complexion dimmed," and the orchard grass strewn with pearly wreck. The Cherry tree's magic season is at an end; it seemed to last scarcely longer than a day. With the first hot shafts of April's sun it startles into bloom, shaken out in snow-wreaths all over the tree, a waste of most lavish loveliness. It is something gained, once in the twelvemonth's round of common-place, if only for a moment to stand beside a Cherry tree in blossom. The blue sky looks infinitely far off, seen through such a maze of flowery myriads. And now Apple blossoms are coming on in rosy swift succession. How beautiful they are! and is it not time that water-colour artists should cease to weary, by attempting so vainly to pourtray them? (This only by the way.) They have the merit of lasting just long enough for us to enjoy them well; yet beautiful as they are, I do not know if they can ever quite compare with the frail short-lived cherry. If the Espaliers in the kitchen garden alongside the middle walk would but flower together all at once, that walk in May would be better than

any picture-gallery. But our gallery walls perversely decorate themselves only a little bit at a time. One bit, at a corner of the cross-walks, is now in full perfection. A faint delicious perfume steals out through the iron gate to the flower-garden, inviting as one passes by, to turn and peep within. There are the trained leafless branches covered thick with knots of flower. They open very deliberately, and there abide for a little happy while, self-conscious, round, and pink, and firm; then there comes a setting of delicate green around the flowers; and then the Apple tree in bloom is one of earth's loveliest sights. Apple blossom must be added to my pharmacopœia of sweet smells. To inhale a cluster of Blenheim Orange gives back youth for just half a minute after. It is not merely that with the perfume the heart goes back to remembered times—it is a real, absolute elixir! Our young Siberian Crab trees are like great white bouquets; and behind the pigeon-house there is a wonder of Japanese Apple (*Pyrus malus floribunda*). It is like a fountain of flowers, tossing its pink flower-laden branches in every direc-

tion. Blue Periwinkles creep over the ground underneath it. In the autumn I shall hope to plant several more of these lovely trees somewhere on the lawn, where we may see and enjoy them from the windows. And now the Primrose—

> " Lady of the springe,
> The lovely flower that first doth show her face ;
> Whose worthy prayse the pretty byrds do syng,
> Whose presence sweet the wynter's colde doth chase,"

has ceased to glad us " with worldes of new delightes." She is on the wane, " with her bells dim "—as old Ben Jonson said ; but I should not call them bells. She dies upon a bed of vivid green amidst tall grasses and her own thick-coming leaves, as stars grow pale before the dawn. And we are faithless to her beauty in the presence of other, fresher loveliness ; and we care not though the Primrose is dead.

The Tulips in the parterr—it is the older and prettier way to spell it without an " e " at the end—are now the chief ornament of the garden and the delight of my eyes. Timely rains strengthened the stalks to

rise to their full height, and there are the beds now, a blaze of scarlet and yellow splendour. There are tall Tulips and short Tulips, rose and crimson, scarlet and orange Tulips, striped and dashed, and brown and white, and every shade of Tulip colour. A few grow between little box and golden Arbor Vitæ bushes, and all the beds are deeply fringed with Crocus leaves. I am aware that as a matter of the highest principle, Tulips are seldom mixed; the colours are usually arranged separately. Long experience has taught me, however, to have nothing to do with principles—in the garden. Little else than a feeling of entire sympathy with the diverse characters of your plants and flowers is needed for "art in the garden." If sympathy be there, all the rest comes naturally enough. No brighter, gayer garden scene can be imagined than on a sunny morning, turning the corner of a clipped Yew—buttressed out from the house—to come upon the parterr, decked in all its gay brilliancy of Tulips. The sculptured stone pillar rises from a little mound of Stonecrop in the centre, often with a pigeon or a thrush

pluming itself on the top. Suddenly the little flock of fantail pigeons with whistling wings descend among the many-coloured brilliants, and there, in the emerald, dewy interspaces, they strut and play in their pride and purity of whiteness. My favourite Parrot Tulips do not as yet make much way; the lack of sunshine keeps their buds green. It was in Venice, years ago, that first I fell in love with Tulips such as these. On the marble altars of one of the great Jesuit churches were vases filled with Parrot Tulips, all cut-edged and gold and scarlet-splashed. The cloister garden behind the church was full of them. It is a strange disorderly beauty, and sometimes draggles and hangs its untidy head like a Bell-flower, and sometimes flaunts it up full in the sun's face. There are Forget-me-nots in many parts of the garden; their long smoke-like lines of turquoise are specially pleasing. Two square beds in the entrance court, set between the black Yews, are also a success—Forget-me-not, flecked with pink Saponaria—they give the idea of blue mist touched by the sunset. In the Fantaisie, bushes of

orange-coloured Berberis Darwinii are in great perfection of bloom. There is something peculiarly delightful in the way they have of spreading the earth with orange, while yet the laden boughs above own no apparent loss. The orange colour contrasts well also with a chance lot of purple Honesty, which has grouped itself round a smooth-stemmed young Mulberry at the end of the turf walk. The walk itself is very bright, with an irregular bordering of white and pink Phlox Nelsoni—a Cheiranthus, or a deep blue Gentian, here and there. The little low-growing Phlox comes in exquisite patches of colour all over the garden. When in flower, the plant itself—which is straggling and rather ugly—is completely hid by a flat mass of close-set bloom. In these "gardens on a level" I am always wishing for rockeries and little low terraces, which should be all draped with Convolvulus Mauristiana, Phlox Nelsoni, Aubretia, and wild Ivy and Alyssum, or something yellow. I should not much care for many rare Alpine plants, I think; though a surprise of the kind here and there would be charm-

ing. Colour I must have, and plenty of it, to rejoice the eye and make glad the heart.

A tract of wild, savage scenery, six square yards in extent, is in contemplation at the afforested end of the Fantaisie. Already one or two large pieces of a sort of conglomerate have been conveyed here, and are frowning in an open space amongst the wild Bluebells. There is a background of dark Arbor Vitæ, and beyond, the pleasant fields are seen, with the cows and Elms and an Oak tree. There exists a certain necessity for feature in this flattest of all places! The Yew hedges and pyramids have done much to give character to the flower garden, and now there must be rocks for variety.

A heap of fragments of an old headless statue lies near the rocky waste; part of a sitting figure—a hand and a foot—and lumps of heavy drapery, overlaid in beautiful green velvet of moss. Very forlorn the broken stones look, and I cannot decide to make them into rockwork. None now know whom the statue in its day was meant to represent —probably a garden goddess, Flora or Po-

mona—but its history is rather quaint, if not touching. It was beloved by a lady who lived here once, and hated by her sister, and according as each for the time reigned in the other's absence, it was set up in a niche of the garden wall, or cast down with ignominy. At last the sister who loved the statue died, and then it was broken to pieces, and flung down a well. It was fished up again long after, before our time. Tradition tells of another statue, an image of Old Time, that stood or sat at one end of the pond in "the park," but of this there remains no trace.

I am happy in the possession of two long-desired flowers, which seem now to be settling down in their new abode. One is the pale-blue Star Anemone Apennina, common in the Ilex woods of Frascati; the other, the lovely purplish-brown Fritillary (*Meleagris*), found wild in river meadows near us. Fritillary is no easy word for poetry, yet it is named by at least one poet. Matthew Arnold, in his "Thyrsis," says—

"I know what white, what purple fritillaries

The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields."

I think no other flower of any kind can compare with it in finish and exquisite grace of form. The purplish, dove-like colour I believe to be the same described in old French as "colombette."

May 15.—To-day, amid the brilliant green of new leaves and the singing and twittering of a thousand birds in the sun's warm glow, one keeps saying to oneself—

"Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king,"

or some such old snatch of songs that seem to wander upon the soft sweet air. Ah, yes, "the year's pleasant king"! and yet our spring is a beautiful spirit, and she has been hovering about us; but now, to-day, she has set her feet upon the earth, and there is a great triumph of verdure on the trees and on the grass; and Apple trees meet her in fulness of bloom, and May-buds are swelling on the Thorns to make up for lost time; and all the edges of meadow-grass are jewelled with little gems of purple, and blue, and red, and the broad fields shine in silver and gold.

The short reign of Narcissus Poeticus has begun; our large old clumps down one side of the Broad Walk are not so fine as usual; frosts and cold heavy rains laid the leaves of some of them, and sometimes turned them yellow; but within the walled garden the clumps are as beautiful as ever—throngs of long-stalked silvery flowers, stiff and firm, with the stiffness and strength of perfect health. Narcissus Poeticus is lovely; and we need not trouble to know if it be the very flower named by Theocritus, Virgil, and Ovid. The east border, though not much varied as yet, is gay and full of promise. There are double pale yellow Ranunculus (the Swiss meadow kind), and bunches of Heartsease, violet and brown Auriculas, sheets of double white Anemones, and the Riviera double scarlet—which, however, never with us comes scarlet, but only dull red; Tulips, Stonecrops, Kingspear, Phlox Nelsoni, double King's-cups, and Bachelors' Buttons, a patch of Gentians at the south angle of the wall, with yellow Corydalis Lutea peering out of chinks in the old bricks above. Crowds of Lilies are springing up in the background, with

purple Iris and Pæonies in bud. Solomon's Seal (Lady's Signet) in many nooks and corners unfolds its curious club-shaped leaf-buds, and all its bells will soon be hung. Pansies, under the south wall, make a bright display; there are three large oblong beds—lilac, yellow, and deep royal purple; also a round bed of semi-double Anemones, whose scarlet colour, about mid-day, is actually dazzling; and one of Ranunculus not yet opened. Behind these beds, against the wall, are white Irises, almost ready to bloom, and several clusters of the garden Star of Bethlehem—valuable in its way, but not nearly so pretty as the wild sort, and most precise in its daily system of early closing and late opening.

Between the tennis-court and the little lawn belonging to the Firs and Cedar, the walk winds along beside a close of chosen trees—Plane, Silver Birch, pink Thorns, variegated Maple, etc., all in their pleasant time of youth, having been planted only a little over eleven years. Portugal Laurel and Box mingle with them in deeper shades. Next the walk are Sweet Briar and well-

berried Aucubas; one Aucuba is still covered with scarlet fruit and golden leaves. There is yellow Spanish Broom, and tall trees of white Broom wave long white plumes, leaning over the path. White Broom, they say, is "the Juniper tree" that Elijah sat down under. If so, the shade must have been but scanty! Soon the path turns past a Yew-tree, and becomes the Primrose Walk, along under the line of Elms.

On the left are the *Allée Verte*, and the dovecote, and small orchard, bounded by Beech and Yew, and crossed by flower-bordered smooth-shaven grassy ways, all leading to the Broad Walk; on the right a little hidden path passes on to the oft-named Fantaisie. Just before coming to the Yew tree, on warm days ever since the beginning of the month, one is met and surrounded by a wonderful cloud of fragrance! One looks round in vain for some bed of flowers whence should proceed so powerful a scent. It is like the finest Jasmine and Citron, and I know not what of sweetest unknown incense. It is the greeting sent out from a dense mass of Spurge Laurel (*Daphne pontifia*), with un-

obtrusive green flowers in full bloom. It grows over a bit of the Iris bank, and its great luxuriance proves how it loves a southern aspect.

In our garden the birds have divided the kingdom amongst them, and in this half is the portion that fell to the reed sparrow. He keeps the Silver Birch alive with his busy note. Landmarks, known only to themselves, divide the territory of the reed sparrow from the realm of the nightingale. The fiery-hearted nightingale! He sings all day, and his song makes the night glorious. The north-east region of the garden he keeps for himself alone. There, on still evenings, long after sunset, is heard the faint barking of distant watch-dogs, or the sound of horses' hoofs on the road. There is his favourite tree—the grand old Thorn—where, as he sings, he may press a thousand thorns into his breast! There, across the hedge, he sees the meadow with a shimmering yellow of Cowslips all over it—if Cowslips be his desire, as is said. There, not too far off, is the straight long railroad—and he loves the thunder of the train, and the red, fire-spitting

engine; but late in the night, when there is dark and death-like silence among the trees, then the nightingale claims possession of the whole, and all the garden is his own. I know not if the nightingale's song be melancholy or joyous. His voice has all the pathos of the finest things, and in the broken notes we feel that not all nor half his soul is uttered, and in each splendid fragment there is the sense of endless possibilities; this, I think, is the secret of the nightingale's incomparable charm.

I have omitted to mention amongst our Pansies, a very choice kind. It is a curious burnt-brown colour, like the once fashionable "Paris brûlé." We name it Highcliff, after the place from whence we had it first. Two large pink Oleanders in the greenhouse will soon be blossoming all over. We tried them last year in the open air, but they did not do, and had to return to their glass. A lovely face gazes at me all the time I write, and will not suffer itself to be neglected! It is a choice white Cactus of great size, with warm lemon colouring in the outer

leaves. The stamens are so delicately set, they tremble at the slightest touch, and the starry pointal is itself a flower!

JUNE.

A Mosaic of Nectared Sweets.

IX.

JUNE.

Of Pink May—Swallows in the Porch—Flowers de Luce —Poppies—A Little Scotch Rose, and "Clutie."

June 6.—It is difficult to know what to say about the garden in June. There is so much to say, I can hardly tell how to begin. The leafy month earns well its title, so grandly full-leafed are the trees; in finer leaf, I think, than they have been for many a year. The Elms stand out against the sky in rounded blocks of green, and in the Lime avenue the broad leaves meeting overhead are round and pure in outline, untouched as yet by destroying worms, untorn by tempests. The young Horse Chestnuts along the little water-course are nearly twice the size they were

last summer, when cruel winds had left them only a few ragged discoloured leaves. The flower-spikes of a Chestnut within the garden measure near a foot in length. The great red Horse Chestnut (*Pavias rubra*) is red all over; it is a mass of blossom almost from the ground upwards to the very top. The tree is a fine sight, and if it were not so common one scarcely should tire of admiring it. The season makes a great difference in the colouring of the blossoms. Sometimes they come out almost yellow, from too little sun and too much rain; but in the rich *floraison* of to-day their colour is almost crimson. Then the Thorns are in great perfection; the branches of double Pink May can be compared to nothing else but bars of pink velvet. The double scarlet varieties are finer than usual, and under the hot sun their vivid colour is quite dazzling. We find this sort rather capricious; some years there is more green than red, and when the trees were younger the red was finer. A little single Thorn draped itself down to the very grass in scarlet bloom; but it lasts so brief a time that every petal now has fallen. It is a

picturesque, delightful tendency in all trees to bend and stretch out to meet each other; their branches love to touch and interlace. So, at this time, across many of our green garden walks the flowering May makes beautiful red-garlanded arches. Pink May and Laburnum interweave their branches, and in another place a Cherry and a Thorn have succeeded in meeting. A little further on, an Apple reaches out long arms above the turf to touch a copper Beech. Here, in this corner, there is also Laurel; and Brake Fern, springing of itself, will soon be tall enough to reach almost the Apple branches. The Beeches, on either side the *Allée Verte*, embower the walk, while along the outmost line their slender drooping shoots stretch themselves to meet and embrace more staid and slow young Elm branchlets, spreading from the great old trees. The nightingale's old White Thorn shone white like a great snow mountain for about ten days, surpassing all the rest in beauty; and not far from it, deep in a thorny thicket of Dewberry mixed with Ivy and Nettles, we found the nightingale's nest. I often visited her, and

she would lie close, with head laid back, and bright, black, watchful eye fixed full upon me; but I never saw her strange, smoked eggs, because she would never stir from the nest. Massive gleams—if such an anomaly can be said—of yellow Spanish and English Broom are shining between green trees, in contrast with paler gold of overhanging Laburnum. I wonder if the Riviera Broom would live in this climate. I mean the Broom that grows something like a Rush, with the flowers set all round its polished stem.* In the orchard border an immense luxuriantly rounded bush of Weigela replaces the Pyrus of last month, the lovely pink of its blossom set off by the tender green around it. These are all beautiful bits of colour, and yet they are only samples, as it were, of what I wish and may partly hope for some day; for a Laburnum colonnade is in contemplation, and lilac closes, and golden cloisters of Genista, some day, there must be! Something also should be made of the pale hang-

* *Spartium junceum.*

ing clusters of Wistaria—a *pergola* ceiled in with its lilac pendants, or small bushes standing alone, in some grassy place. Our Rhododendrons and Azaleas are in great beauty, and since last year, are grown and filled out; the season seems in some way to have pleased them well. We do not attempt fine sorts, though there is just a sprinkling of crimson and white and a few others, amongst the showy old pinkish-lilac sort. The broad border by the side of the walk along the Holly hedge is filled with Rhododendrons and Azaleas; as yet only the common—yet always beautiful—yellow and creamy-white Azalea, filling all the air with its peculiar scent. The success of this border is especially pleasant, for the young Americans made one rather nervous at times during the early spring—on days when the weather did not exactly suit them they would look so pitiable and dejected, with their leaves hanging straight down. Into this border were moved most of the aged drawn-up Rhododendrons, that used to crowd the shrubberies. Here, with more room, they have begun to bush out healthily. Yet there

is at present no peat or made-up bed, and the ground is flooded every winter. We think of giving them a few cartloads of peat next autumn, just by way of encouragement. In another year this walk will deserve to be called "the Rhododendron Walk." At the back of the border two double scarlet May trees are now radiant with blossom. About three years ago they were removed here out of the garden, where for some reason they had become sickly and had ceased to bloom. Change of air and scene has worked wonders: they have increased greatly in size, and the move is apparently forgotten. Beyond these is the new orchard, deep in growing grass, and then the Larch Walk; and—and then—palings, if the truth must out! Beyond the Holly hedge, in the shrubbery, wherein we stuff everything that has nowhere else to go, there is at this moment a white glory of snow-balled Gueldres Rose. In my ideal garden there shall be large single trees of Gueldres Rose standing alone; not, as they generally are grown, "smored up" with crowded shrubs.

But we have wandered far away from the

beloved garden. Over the south porch is the Lady's Bower—the chamber always so called in old English houses—with Vine-wreathed windows. Swallows are building in the garden porch. It is the chimney swallow, with the red throat. Their confidence and tameness, the perpetual darting in and out of blue-black wings (like tenderly domesticated trout! as Mr. Ruskin says), and the conversational cheery twitter that goes on all day long, are a continual feast. South, north, and east are the three porches of the house, and swallows in all three. At the north they are more bold, but somehow less familiar. Darting shoals of swallows dash in and out, through the open doors into the house, and two nests are now nearly built. The family motto, "God's providence is my inheritance," written round the porch walls, suits well such a place of birds; while the footless martin—sign of the seventh son—borne on the stone shield over the door among the Roses and Ivy, our swallows may also feel to be not wholly inappropriate. Under the east porch, which is now green with Virginian Creeper and Vine—and which

will be in its season purple with Clematis, a pair of swallows are arranging a settlement. Here also, though not quite so welcome, no one dreams of denying them. After the sun has turned the corner of the house, this porch is cool and shady. On the threshold is set the legend, "Nos et meditemur in horto," taken from a sun-dial in the nuns' garden at Polesworth, near Tamworth. The invitation, I think, is generally disregarded. Many cross that threshold to walk in the garden and admire the flowers, or to play tennis, or perhaps—to smoke. But I do not think people often meditate much in the garden in these days. Dogs do sometimes, as they sit in the sun. But I wonder how it is done!

From the south front a lot of Everlasting Pea has wound itself round between the wall and the Yew buttress, taking up fully one half of the porch. It is well named Everlasting! One has nothing to do but to dig it up, and cut and hack it away, and the next year it will appear strong and hearty and in double quantity. It takes no hint that there may be too much of a good thing! And yet, when it looks so fresh and hand-

some, with its large bright flowers, it would be cruel to wish it away. So let it be, to teach its lesson and to smother as it will. The white Irises are nearly over, and Wood Strawberries begin to redden under the windows. An old Maiden's Blush Rose, covered with buds, peeps in at the dining-room window on one side, and on the other is the lovely pink of a most perfect Moss Rose. The parterr in front of the window is bedded out, of course. I know that it soon will be a blaze of well-chosen colour; but excepting the golden mount of Stonecrop in the centre, I do not take much personal interest in its summer phase. It is fortunate for the garden's character that this should be so; for as the invention of new combinations of plants and colours would be to me impossible, this is left always in our Gardener's hands, with full confidence that the result will be as perfect as such things can be. From the dining-room window we can also see, between the Sumac and a Box tree, near where a Pæony showers crimson on the daisies, a tiny mound of turf. It has been there since the end of last month;

and under it lies the dear little favourite of nine summers—Clutie, the little black Skye terrier. She always loved the dining-room! . . . We can now almost walk all round the garden in deep cool shade, such growth the trees have made! The Broad Walk must always be exposed to the sun; but from the west of it, across the lawn where the old bowling-green once was, the distance from shade to shade lessens year by year as the trees grow on. There is a charming well-shaded welt along the grass, of purple Pansies and white Pinks, in two thick lines; and on the sunny side a very bright dash of Limnanthes Douglasii has made a self-sown edging. As if it enjoyed the pleasant coolness of a north-west border, one lovely double Narcissus still lingers on in her early freshness. When hot sunbeams pierce the shade, every day I think must be her last. The Spurge Laurel has relapsed into the plain dulness of its summer state, but the Iris bank upon which it grows is as lovely as heart can desire. Cedar and Copper Beech and one or two Firs cast light shadows upon the company of Irises, and help

them not to wither up too quickly. The prevailing hue is lilac, with stronger tones, and yellows intermixed. Each one in turn seems loveliest, but one chief beauty (*Iris pallida*) has broad petals of soft grey, most delicately flushed with pink. Then there are lilacs marked with deeper lines and white with lilac edges (*Iris aphylla*), finely pencilled; Enchantress, and several other yellow Variegatas, with lines of red or brown; pale yellow, with the three outer petals intense velvety-purple; and one pale bluish, with deep blue-purple velvet outside, and bright yellow brush, well marked. These two are much better than gay Darius, or the handsome sullen Versailles. The sober old Marquise (*Iris lurida*), too—who is, however, more like Mrs. Delany in dove-coloured mode silk hood!—after long delay, is there amongst the best. Does any plant exist that loves not a corner or an edge? I think not one; so a little corner here, where a narrow grass path crosses the Iris bank into the Beechen close, is made especially lovely by the undesigned grouping of three Irises, enriched by a background of green Ferns and

Beech. The centre of the group is a deep red-purple Iris (from Vesuvius), a finely coloured yellow and purple, and between them a pure white. These grow tall and stately from out their straight stiff leaves, while a little Welsh Poppy, established there by chance, brings in its crumpled lemon-gold with the happiest effect. Colour effects, wherever they appear in our garden, are seldom planned. Somehow it does not come naturally to think, "Here there shall be blue Larkspur and white Lilies," or there red Poppies and something else. But it is quite an exquisite delight to find the most beautiful accidents of colour in unexpected places all about the garden. Then these chances may give hints, which we can take or not. At a corner behind the dovecote there is a grand crimson Pæony, mixed up with brilliant orange Marigolds, some of them black-eyed; red and yellow are splendid, if well used. Against the dark brown of a Cryptomeria Elegans stands a tall Tulip, like white china painted and streaked blood-red; at least it is over now, but I see it all the same. Then there is a patch of Welsh

Poppy, growing just as one finds a patch of Gentian or white Crocus on the Alps—and with it London Pride, a mass of feathery red, growing in the same way. Under the trees, one meets a pallid Columbine, looking like a ghost, and just by chance in the lilac Iris bed occurs one rich carmine Rose. I do not even think the delicately refined colour combination of dwarf-growing Gloire de Dijon Roses and bronze Heartsease was quite intentional; they mix, however, strangely well. And the bed of pink Roses —Prevost and Jules Margottin—with the white Pink "Mrs. Sinkins," promises to be an equal success.

One would fain stay for awhile the steps of the summer flowers in the garden; but these bright daughters of the year, in long procession, flit by more swiftly as each new day arises. They are in such a hurry now to come and to be gone, alas! Even at this very moment there are signs of the quick approach of some of our latest loves. For in the east border, among crimson Pæonies and lingering purple Iris, appears already a single Dahlia! In such a multitude one

hardly knows which flowers to note, they are all so fair. But in the Fantaisie, I think I could almost let the Roses go which are bursting into bloom as bushes and as pillar Roses, just to keep it a little longer as it is now, with the hosts of White Foxgloves, with double white Rockets, yellow Day Lilies, and puce-purple Columbines; Irises and white stars of Nicotiana rising over an edging of pink and white Phlox Nelsoni—all these and many more, set off by Cupressus and Fir, interspersed among the flowers beyond; and flaring across the grass walk, a great fiery scarlet Oriental Poppy. With the morning shining through it, this flower seems made up of fire from the sun itself—the very purest possible essence of scarlet. Several magnificent Poppies light up the garden at different points. Their scarlet is a fast colour; neither wind nor sun will scorch or change it in the least, and in this quality it is superior to so many flowers whose colours fly directly—some more easily than others. The brown Heartsease cannot stand the sun, while the large purple is unmoved. The crimson of the

Pæony flies; and the rose-red double Pyrethrum scorches quickly. Lilac (excepting in Wistaria) seems one of the fastest colours in the garden!—though rain-drops standing all night in a half-faded lilac Iris become a most beautiful colour! Although it seems that scarlet, yellows, and colours in which blue is mixed stand best. Besides the great scarlet Poppies, the annual Poppies are coming on, in all their varied pinks, and reds, and whites; their large crumpled petals have the shape and all the transparent delicacy of rare sea shells. There is also a charming uncertainty as to the colours or amount of doubleness to be expected. Amongst the best are bright reds with a clear white eye, and pink-hemmed whites. But whenever anything approaching a common field Poppy makes its appearance amongst them—as often happens, they have such a strong tendency to run back—it has to be pulled up immediately. Our Columbines are not so fine as they were last summer; their flowers are smaller and not so free in form. The Californian scarlet and yellow is so small as to be a miniature of itself. There is, however, one fine plant with

flowers pale violet and primrose, and the various tints of "crushed strawberry" are very lovely, especially in the double Columbines.

June 15.—Here is the middle of the month, and the garden is more bewildering than ever! Rosebuds in countless multitudes are blooming everywhere, in every part. And as the fashion is to call her so, we must allow the Rose to be queen of flowers; and since it is most true that Roses are—

"Not royal in their smells alone, but in their hue,"

so, though my beloved Iris has not yet faded from the garden, the Rose now must be worshipped. One by one we have already greeted many of our old best favourites. Amongst them Boursault came first, climbing the south gables of the house; then Souvenir d'un Ami, large and full flushed, at the very top of the long bare old stem of a climber, any age; then Gloire de Dijon, which, though even more profuse in its bloom than usual, has a something not quite right about it this year—a sort of old expression. After that, Maiden's Blush and Moss Rose. A great wild blush of Boursault Rose grows

at the north end of the garden—the flowers are lovely, recalling a little in their colour and irregular shape what I remember as "the Musk Rose," in the gardens of former days. Coupe d'Hébé, on the wall of the gardener's cottage, is perfect in scent and shape and in true rose-colour. The yellow Briar is finer than usual, and Damask Roses are opening fast. La France, too—the Rose whose scent is made of the finest attar—has delighted us with half-a-dozen beautiful blooms; Blairii No. 2 begins to crest the wire arches (one never hears of No. 1 !). But among the Rose joys which abound already, or that we still expect in endless succession, none are so dear to me as one little ragged bush, covered now with small white Scotch Roses of exquisite perfume. This little Rose bush is forty-eight years old, to my certain knowledge. It was planted by my father, and it has been mine for the last twenty years. Last year it showed some signs of feebleness, so we moved it from the over-crowded place where it had been for eleven years, into a newly made bed with a south aspect. There, with a companion of

the same kind, it promises to take a new lease of life. Strange that such a little Rose should thus live on for well-nigh half a century, calmly putting forth its leaf and bloom summer after summer, whilst so many of the men and women who knew it once have passed away! It somehow makes one think of the old monk pointing to the frescoes on his convent walls, and saying, "These are the realities; we are the shadows."

A word of praise must be said for the blue and green of Anchusa Italica at the southern end of the Broad Walk, and the beds of white Pinks (these are the old-fashioned "maiden pinks of odour faint"), mixing their perfume deliciously with Musk. The beds and large patches of beautiful "Mrs. Sinkins" are very good this season. They are, as Bacon would say, "fast flowers of their smell," in flavour like Clove Carnations.

JULY.

"As the last taste of sweet is sweetest last,
Writ in remembrance more than things
long past."—SHAKESPEARE.

X.

MIDSUMMER AND JULY.

Of Pæonies—Iris Sibirica—Green Peas—Fennel—Strawberries—Lilies—The Vine.

June 24.—"Ere the parting hour go by, quick, thy tablets, Memory." In less than a week July will be here, and June will fade away into the past and be forgotten, while more than half its loveliness is still unnoted and untold. So here on Midsummer night, when the spirits of earth and air have power, let me call back for a moment the dear-worth vision of flowers that were my delight in the gone sweet days of early June. I would try also to fix the remembrance of a few, out of the thousand glories of the day, doomed to die before ever the story of next

month begins. And first the Pæonies, which I have as yet scarcely named. Earliest of all came the crimson-pink single Pæony (*Pæonia peregrina*), with yellow stamens and bluish leaves, like a giant Rose of Sharon (the single red Scotch Rose); then the pale pink double; then the heavy crimson, that pales so quick in sun or rain; then, most beautiful of all, the pure, cold, white Pæony, with a faint tinge of colour on its outer petals. Last of all the large rose-red—rose-coloured, with an evanescent perfume like a dream of the smell of a wild Rose, yet in substance so staunch a flower that I have known rose Pæonies retain their beauty for two full weeks in a glass of water. All these, excepting one or two who here and there outstay the rest, are gone by.

And then the Elder! The hedgerows have been white with it; and there were days when all the air was scented with it, and the country smelt of Elder! The path under our one tree is now a milky way, covered with a myriad little fallen stars. They remind one of the far-away Olives'

starry blossoms, when they fall softly among Lady Tulips and Gladioli in May. Syringa (*Philadelphus*, or Mock Orange) has come and almost gone ; three varieties—the old small one, the large-flowered, and the half-double sort. I like most the first, and this has also the most powerful scent. A large old bush of it grows in the grass, just without the glass door in the wall opening into the greenhouse. Dear Syringa ! best hated and best loved of flowers. The lovers of it hail its blooming with enthusiasm, and break off sprigs to wear as they pass the bush, whilst others will go the other way round to avoid passing near. And now it suffers still further insult by being denied its own old name, Syringa ! Even in 1597, in Gerarde's time, there began to arise some confusion between it and the Lilac, or " Blew Pipe Tree."

And now, at this very time, has come a new burst of Irises—the narrow-leaved kinds. Not the real Spanish Irises ; their time is not yet. We have a few old plants whose flowers are deep bronze, flame-centred, in yellow gold, and a stronger, commoner kind, of full lilac colour. One

little plant, growing in a pet corner by the iron gate in the south wall, has a delicate primrose and lilac-tipped bloom. And there is the great white Flag Iris, whose grand leaves stand four feet high. The right place has not yet been found for this fine plant. For three years past he has just borne with us, and no more; I fear he dislikes us—and he shows it. By the watercourse the yellow Flags are as yellow as possible, in rich contrast with their dark green leaves; and in the Fantaisie, where the China Tulip stood last month, showing bright against the dusky Cryptomeria Elegans, is now a fine root of Iris (*Sibirica alba*). The blue Sibirica is good, but this white variety is most lovely. One could not pass it by without remarking the peculiar whiteness of its small shapely flowers, set on such long slender stalks. How wonderful are the contrasts of white in flowers! Of those now in bloom together, one hardly knows which to call the whitest of them all. This little Iris retains through its whiteness a dim remembrance, as it were, of blue.

There is the kitchen garden, too! The fresh and brilliant beauty that just now it holds within its walls will soon be past, giving place to richer, more sober colours. Looking through the old ironwork of the gate, up the straight middle walk, there is such a splendour of brightly blended colour in the flowers on either side! As yet, they are in their prime; the key-note of colour is white—double Rockets, double white Pyrethrums, and white Pinks. Then, bending down over the walk, mixing in with the whiteness, glowing through leaf and branch in brilliant intervals of colour, are Roses—pink, crimson, blush; Annual Poppies, tender or dazzling in their hue; clouds of pale blue Delphinium, with spires of deepening blue over-topping all the rest. Just midway between the pink and crimson Roses, a Briar, wreathed about with small yellow blooms, hangs over the cross walks at the corner. Masses of low blue Campanula fill in below or between the larger flowers. Right at the end, another iron gate lets in the glimmering of cool shades beyond. A little wren's nest is there,

ensconced snugly in a bowery Clematis, half-way up the pillar; the nest cannot be seen so far off, but I know well how the small entrance hole is quite filled up with greedy little yellow beaks and gaping mouths! The little mother is hard at work for them, somewhere near—hunting the bark of an Elm, most likely. The golden wrens have brought out their families—two nestfuls. We found the nests hanging in the Yews, and now the garden seems to be full of little elfin scissors' grinders, busy all day long.

I have a fancy to open the gate and go all round the kitchen garden quite prosaically. The other garden will seem still sweeter, after. Here, on the left, is a breadth of wonderful Lettuces, round and close like small round Cabbages, with milk-white middles; and beyond, some taller and tied-up—more like Salad. Near the Lettuces are tall ranks of Peas, hung all over with well-filled pods. I think I like these beautiful green Peas, growing here, as much as when served up in a dish for dinner. There seems always to be something attractive to

The Parterr.

Art of all kinds in pea pods; from the pods sculptured on the great bronze gates of the cathedral at Pisa, or the raised needlework of the sixteenth century, to the ornaments in the jewellers' shops of Paris or the portraits of Marrowfats or Telegraph Peas in the advertisement-sheets of gardening papers—these last being really pictures, though not meant so. I remember once being shown a white satin spencer of Queen Elizabeth's, embroidered in butterflies and Green Pea pods half-open, to show the rows of peas within.

I think there is Beetroot, and a fine lot of young Cabbages, beyond the Peas—in which no one can feel any particular interest; and oh! such a sweet patch of seedling Mrs. Sinkins white Pink. I wish that Pink did possess a more poetical name—Arethusa or Boule de Neige! but the thing is done, and to the end of time Mrs. Sinkins will be herself. Next comes a little square of Japanese Iris, the tall stems tipped with swelling buds whose grand unfolding I long to see. Rows of young Sage plants grow near, quite unlike sage-green, so-called, in

colour; and a nice little plantation of healthy-looking Fennel. That is for broiled mackerel; but there is to me another interest connected with Fennel, that lies in a lurking hope, always unfulfilled, of finding upon it a caterpillar of the rare *Papilio regina*. Caterpillars of another sort are only too multitudinous on the Currants growing up the walls. The increase of them, and of the sawflies belonging to them, is not short of miraculous. One may stamp out whole families and clear the bushes, and next morning they will be beginning again. Yet invariably in the act of destroying there creeps in a sort of questioning, whether the caterpillars have not full as good a right to the Currants as we have—except, indeed, that we, and not they, planted them. But the sawflies would seem to have at least a right to live—a greater right, perhaps, than we to have tarts; yet they are spared none the more for such-like uncomfortable reflections. On the south wall the fruit trees seem to be more or less flourishing. An old Nectarine is covered with fruit. Then comes Apricot tree No. 1, on which I find no Apricots;

Nos. 2 and 3 the same, 4 dead, and 5 with "a good few" on it. Then we come to Peaches, plenty of them; then a beautiful dark-leafed Fig tree; and then the Cherries, well fruited and well netted. And so on round the walls. Near the wren's nest there is another large patch of Pinks, commoner and better than any, with the neatest lacing of purple-madder or lake. And here a powerful fragrance stops one short; it is the strawberries, smelling deliciously. They are littered down with clean straw, and netted close, for the discomfiture of blackbirds. The scent takes me back a very long way—back to an inconceivable time, when this old smell of Strawberries, borne across the hedge in the hot noontide of some summer holiday, was reason enough to set us wild vagrants of the garden scrambling through the thorns to seize the exquisite delight of spoiling our neighbour's Strawberries—a joy that was never marred, for we were never found out. Sun and rain have both been kind, and this is our second week of immense red Presidents, one of the oldest and best of strawberries—the

older Caroline being now quite forgotten. The espaliers are showing plenty of Apples and Pears. Three Pear trees, standing at the four cross-ways, are curiously in bloom; the blossoms are all sickly-looking and undersized, but the trees are covered with them up to the very top, while fruit is set at the same time. I dislike this unnatural blooming, for the mind will persist in reverting to foolish sayings and superstitions connected with trees bearing fruit and flower at the same time.

Among the pleasant sights of this midsummertide, perhaps the pleasantest of all is the great thicket of wild Roses growing within the wire network that bounds the tennis-lawn on the garden side. The east, shining full upon it every morning, brings forth hundreds of new-blown Roses. Very often, as you pass into their sweet presence from under the Plane trees, the air is redolent of a subtle perfume—not always, though, nor every day, for Roses are capricious of their scent. The yellow-stamened centre of each flower glows like a tiny lamp of gold, and the soft petals surrounding it are rose-pink of

the tenderest dye. Were these the canker-blooms of Shakespeare? If so, and if in his day they could be said to "live unwooed, and unrespected die," surely now the tide has turned, for the wild Rose is beloved of all; while we must confess that garden Roses now-a-days do not always "die sweet deaths."

July 22.—

"It is not growing like a tree
In bulk that makes man better be.
The Lily of a day
Is fairer far in May:
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flower of light."

Ben Jonson.

Once more our favourite old Ben! Roses are gone, and the memory of them is as of something too beautiful for words. And Lilies, too, are over; the fairest of them, the tall white Lily, with her shining head —*nil candidius*—pure as the shining robe of saints in heaven—better than Solomon in his glory. She, too, is past; nothing of her remains but long dismal stems, with down-hanging shrivelled leaves and melan-

East Gate.

choly pointals undrest of beauty—to tell of her former pride.

The character and features of the Lily would seem to be well marked enough; and yet, sometimes, the popular idea of it is certainly a mixed one. In former days flower-hawkers in the streets of London may be remembered crying, "Lilies, fine white Lilies!" with their barrow-loads of white Thorn, or May blossom, from the country. Some botanical reason there must have been for the Lilies in Ferrari's "De Florum Cultura" (1633) being named Narcissus! I have been studying an odd volume of this curious old book, and the unmistakable Lilies represented in the plates are all "Narcissus Indicus." Even the Water-lily-like Blood Flower is a Narcissus. Very likely these remarks may only show my ignorance.

July must be all retrospect, for all is over —or so it seems to me. After an absence of a few days, on returning to the garden, I find there is a change—an almost autumnal feeling in the air, and withered leaves are blown across the lawn. Faint perfumes linger still about the Limes, and though

no song birds are there, the sound of bees is heard in the green depths above. But we no longer would breakfast under the Limes, as we did so short a while since, in summer days departed. Wind and rain have done their worst amongst the flowers, and yet there is consolation in all that remains. The best are passed away, but beautiful new things are coming on. The Evening Primrose (*Œnothera*) already lights up the garden ways. Variegated Maples, with their foliage white as ivory, look their best against the darkening Elms.* The hedge of Sweet Peas is for the moment in beauty. Sweet Peas go off too quickly in our light warm soil, so we try to prolong their blooming to the latest limit by cutting off their pods as fast as they appear.

Purple draperies of Clematis (Virgin's Bower), in many shades, from the deepest violet softening into grey, make the old brick walls beautiful; or the same Clematis droops

* A small branchlet in one of these white Maples has returned to the original green, and this is also the sole bit of the tree that bears a *bunch of keys*.

from trellises, or clambers up the trees in many parts of the garden. Almost always it so happens that the tender green of Vines mingles with the purple. There is something almost unpleasing in the arrangement of the four petals of Clematis Jackmanni! but much must be forgiven for the sake of such grand colouring. No climbing plant comes near the Vine, perhaps, in perfect grace and beauty of line. The fruitful Vine gives delight to the eye in far larger measure than Virginia Creeper, or any other of our green hangings upon the walls of a house. The Vine is more obedient and yet more free, and its intelligence is greater. Thinking of the Vine as of a person, one would say that her foliage shows all the variety of genius. Scarcely will you find two leaves alike, in shape, or size, or colour. The youngest leaves are half-transparent and golden-green, or reddened by the sun; on some the light lies cold and grey. If the Vine is trained round the window, the leaves seen from within outspread against the light glow like green fires. The very shadiest recesses of the Vine are full of light. And then the

tenderness and strength of her slender beautiful tendrils! How they reach out like sentient hands! and when they have found, how strong and firm their clasp! Then, who does not know and love the curious aroma of her small green flowers, bringing back to memory the smell of a Southern vineyard? Very soon, now, autumn suns will swell the clustered fruit, and purple bloom will begin to show between the leaves. A Vine is one of the only plants whose every leaf, well nigh, may be painted with care in a picture, and yet not seem too much made out. Yet rarely indeed can human hand give the fine thinness and yielding texture of a Vine leaf!

We are never without Portulaca and Mesembryanthemum (how far more simple is the old name—Fig Marigold) about this time, and the two beds of them now flowering are especially brilliant. Cool colours tell beside the scarlet and orange that mostly prevail, and in this way nothing could be more refreshing than the dwarf Ageratum and blue Lobelia, mixed with honey-scented Koniga Maritima Variegata, near the Carna-

tions and Portulaca. The deep blue, with bronze foliage, of the Lobelia beds in the parterr is almost hot beside the cooler blues beyond. The Sumac this year is not in beauty—not as if a sunset cloud had settled down upon it. The multitude of new green shoots would seem to overpower the crimsoned fluff.

AUGUST.

The Garden is a mute Gospel.
The Garden is a perpetual Gala.

XI.

AUGUST.

"My Sunflower"—Of a Garden Sunday—Of Ghosts in the Twilight—Magnolia Grandiflora.

August 6.—The Lime avenue is pleasanter than ever now, on these bright afternoons when the low sun strikes amber shafts through the branches, and light shadows lie on the parquet of brown and yellow leaves beneath. With every breeze hundreds of the winged sea-vessels, like queer little teetotums, come twirling down. The wrens are busy with their second or third nests—without counting the cock-nests at the beginning of the season; the porch swallows are thinking of a second brood, and scatter straws of hay and patches of wet mud untidily upon

the stones underneath their nests; thrushes go about the lawn followed by two or three great awkward young ones (their third family this season), too foolish to pick up worms for themselves. As for the sparrows, they are hard at work with probably the sixth or seventh nest of their series. Roses are coming on in their second bloom; low bushes and standards of La France show large buds and attar-scented blossoms; while crimson Roses of many names glow in richest bloom here and there all over the garden. Precious as are these late Roses, the chord of colour has changed so much since Roses were in their prime, that fresh pink or crimson seem almost misplaced among the fiery reds and scarlet. White Roses are seldom so beautiful as one feels they ought to be; but a small plant of the Japanese Rosa Rugosa, in its first season with us, has been a great pet this summer, with its large white petals; the Macartney also is welcome, flowering as it has for the first time in its life here. The buds have hitherto always fallen off, without an attempt at unclosing, and it has only kept its place on the wall for the sake of the

lovely evergreen leaves and yearly promise of abundant bloom. But the only perfect white Rose, the White Moss, remains still for me a dream and nothing more. There are tall old bluish-pink Roses at the back of the Beechen close which have been blooming in almost rank luxuriance. They, with a few Cabbage Roses and Maiden's Blush, and a yellow Banksia, were all of Roses the garden had when first we came here, eleven years ago. At that time they were thought too ugly almost to live, and were banished to the outskirts. But time has brought them round to the front again; and now these relics of a bygone Rose age are beloved for their redundant and perfumed bloom, and for their most uncommon colour, the red in them being so largely mixed with cold blue. The York and Lancaster Rose—long lost and long coveted—will, I hope, ere next season be established with us. For the other day in Somersetshire we found one growing near a ghostly house in a deserted garden, and from this plant we have some healthy suckers. I cannot keep pace with the new Roses; they are mostly

too large and heavy. They seem to run too far from the flatness of a really typical Rose type.

We have not made *pot pourri* this summer; but the Lavender harvest is gathered in, with spikes unusually fine. I am not sure that they smell much the sweeter for their great size. It is a pleasant time when the Lavender is laid out in trays, and the house is full of the sweetness of it. On these bright windy mornings the Broad Walk looks its best. Looking up from south to north, the end of the walk, framed in with trees, is bounded by a low Quickset hedge, beyond which lies meadow-land, with glimpses of yellow corn-fields. Beyond all is the soft blue of distant wood. Along the Yew hedge, on one side, are long borders in the turf of single Dahlias, in succession to Sweet-williams (Bearded pink); and the other side under the wall is enriched with scarlet, the scarlet of those tall Lychnis which the children call "Summer Lightning" (*Lychnis chalcedonia*, flower of Bristow and Constantinople). And there are sheaves of finely dyed rose-red Phloxes, pyramids of blue

and white Campanula, and clumps of dark blue Salvia; grey and feathery Gypsophila Paniculata also—priceless for the setting off of delicate Poppies and other refined and frail kinds when cut. Yet the mass of colour would be far more brilliant but for the bulbs which lie hidden under the earth. They must not be disturbed by planting in amongst them, so all that is in the border has its place there perennially.

Spaces in the wall behind—where the ancient Pear trees may have perished from old age—are sometimes dressed in spreading Vines. Last month a tall blue Larkspur, near one of these Vines, was caught by the wandering tendrils, and so they grew together, the Larkspur upheld by her friend the Vine with a strong and tender grasp. Green streamers of this Vine also wreathe the head of an iron gate empurpled with intermingling Clematis. Here also, close to the old wall, at regular intervals, are our Sunflowers; some of them grow to nearly ten feet in height. After many trials of other spots, we think they seem to do best planted thus. The shelter saves them

all conflict with wind and rain, and they are tall, and straight, and full, having no cares of weather to divert their gradual growth to beauty. There was a time when I did not love Sunflowers. Their constant repetition as a kind of æsthetic badge can scarcely fail to tire. In those days they had no place in the garden, or only in some out-of-the-way obscure corner. But once I found a little song of William Blake's, and ever since, for the music of it, the Sunflower has been beloved, with the feeling that to know her is to give her your heart.

"Ah, Sunflower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden prime
Where the traveller's journey is done,
Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin, shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves and aspire
Where my Sunflower wishes to go."

Perhaps there is not much of common sense in the words! but they surely are most musical. How grand these Sunflowers are! and there is a sweet and gracious look in the Sunflower's open face. With all her grand

mien and stately stature, she never stares up direct at her god; the golden head half bends down; downward also point the symmetrically set broad leaves, delicately shaped *en cœur*. The whole aspect is one of contemplation, or at least one fancies it to be so. There is also a sort of majesty in the one strong single stem, from which proceeds so fine a show of buds, and flowers, and leaves. Yet I have never been happy enough to see her act the part of the poet's Sunflower—the real Sunflower of our earthly gardens could never turn her head so fast; all that I know she does is to bloom on whichever side of her the sun rises. Poets, nevertheless, are the true seers, and without doubt they know what they say. The French name, "Tournesol," would seem to imply a popular belief that the flower follows the sun.

The silly Dahlia would turn her face to the wall or any way. Brilliant as are these single Dahlias, they are rather trying in their ways; so much rank leaf and stalk, and so little flower; the plants sometimes too large and bushy, sometimes too thin; and

then it is so irritating when their backs are turned as one passes along the walk! The so-called Cactus Dahlia is not at all tiresome; it is beautiful both in form and colour.

Aug. 26. *Sunday Morning.*—After a hundred years, if the Seven Sleepers awoke on an English Sunday morning, they would certainly at once know what day it was. There is nothing else like it for the feeling of intense repose. No other stillness can compare with the deep calm of a Sunday morning such as this. No leaf stirs; there is no cloud moving about in the hot hazy blue; the clatter of the iron road has ceased; the very birds are still. Swallows alone are ever on the wing, and the silence is so profound that the beat of their wings can be heard as they dart by in rapid course. The busy corn-fields lie empty in a golden rest. Only here and there, where the harvest is not yet gathered in, the sheaves, like praying hands, stand together on the field. In the green pastures the grazing cattle seem to tread with hushed and silent step. And

there is a sound of church bells on the air, coming clear yet faint across the level country. There will be no church for the tired harvestmen whom we saw yesterday lying on the dusty grass by the roadside. They are too tired, and too ragged and dirty; but we may hope for them also some restful influences from the quiet of the day, under such a blue sky.

The early morning is always the time of all others for the garden, while the flowers are refreshed with the dew and darkness and cool of night, and are rejoicing yet in the light of a new sun. Soon they will begin to flag in the dry weary round of burning hours. To one who only knows the garden after 8 o'clock a.m., a walk round it between 7 or 8, or earlier, would be a revelation. On this special morning the flowers in the east border seem penetrated through and through with the rapture of existence. Each Sunflower stands with half-transparent shadow sharp cut upon the wall behind it, its petals fresh gilt, its centre sparkling with dew; rose-red Phlox and flaming Sword Lilies (Corn-flag), blue Salvia

intermixed with many-coloured stars of Dahlias, and an indescribable mob of smaller, more insignificant things. Round the corner a great mass of common white Clematis fills the air with fragrance. It is all whiteness and sweetness; it is a summer cloud, a white cumulus of surpassing beauty. One of the stone vases of the gate pillars is completely hidden under the white foam. But this matters not; nothing matters but that we should have the Clematis there, in its loveliness! The Tigridias in the entrance court are wide open, and none would guess how brief their hours were to be. There are a few perfect Roses—morning glories (*Convolvulus major*), and orange Tropœolums ("Larkheels trim") with bluish leaves. The dew lies upon all, and one may say in the garden the Psalmist's words about the valleys thick with corn, for the flowers all seem to laugh and sing with joy. Ten glorious days of almost uninterrupted sunshine have made us very dry. Daily waterings help to keep things alive, but the grass is a little brown in some parts of the lawns, and there are yellow leaves on the Elms and the older

Laburnums. The dead dry leaves rustle so thick under foot in the Lime Avenue, that one looks up to see if any green is left.

Most of the German seed Grasses are already gathered, though a few have still to ripen. We always sow a good variety; they look so fresh while growing, and afterwards are dried for the winter. There is the pretty Tussock Grass, with soft downy tufts, and the long feathery kind, like waving hair; and one, most delicate and spray-like, is a sort of miniature Bulrush, with a green curved head; and then there is a little forest of our English Bashaw Grass (*Bromus aspen*). This is very handsome and gigantic in size, and came up of itself in one of the wild bits of the garden. The handsomest of all our Grasses this year is a fine blue Grass (Lyme Grass, *Elymus arenarius*), from the dunes of Holland. The colour amongst other greens is absolutely blue. It grows so strong, and the leaves so long, that it might almost be mistaken for an Iris. It is strange that this Grass should thrive apparently as well, or better, in a Buckinghamshire garden, than in its native sands! Near

the old Syringa (*Philadelphus*), on the turf at the greenhouse door, two large pots of white Campanula are stood out for change of air. They are so tall that as one passes by in the gloaming, one is startled by these tall white people suddenly appearing out of the dusk. Others of the same pyramidal Campanulas remain in the house. They are pale pinkish blue and white. Hundreds of blossoms cover up and hide the whole plant, and nothing is seen but the mass of wide open flowerets. So cleverly are the flowers arranged, there is no sign of over-crowding —and one asks how this is, for they seem to be set quite close and even. "To questions such as these Nature answers, 'I grow.'" The Auratum Lilies had vainly promised to open for so long that I almost lost patience. The dry weather may have caused them to delay. Constant watering seems now to have begun to take effect, and there are two or three superb blooms. The bulbs are not taken up for the autumn; they are only covered over with fine ashes or cocoa-nut fibre. If a plant will consent to live in its own place winter and summer, it seems

so much more real, somehow. I wished to try the plan with our Spanish Irises, but in their case it proved a complete failure. Our large roots of Salvia Patens are seven years old; they are yearly cut down and covered with ashes.

The parterr is at this time in its full perfection. In other gardens I observe the blue Lobelia has done flowering, but our seedling that we raised, with bronze foliage, is as fine as it was two months ago. I cannot say the blue is so cool as the others, but the staying power of this special kind is of real importance, and the beds are most luminous. I am greatly enjoying a beautiful large blue Agapanthus in a green tub, placed on the grass near a trimmed Box tree, with a black Irish Yew for background. The scarlet Pelargoniums (must that long name be always said ?) glow so hotly, they seem to want as much blue and green as we can give them. Never has our Magnolia Grandiflora flowered so well; I have counted nine great blossoms on the two trees at the same time. The texture of no other flower comes near to the beauty of the Magnolia. I remember

long ago a white-chested beautiful boy, whose mother called him in play her Magnolia boy. That little child was the only flower I ever saw that could compare with the Magnolia!

SEPTEMBER.

"Time will not run back to fetch the age of gold."—MILTON.

"*In graceful succession, in equal fulness, in balanced beauty, the dance of the hours goes forward still.*"—EMERSON.

XII.

SEPTEMBER.

Of Psyche—Of an Old Garden—*Nil Desperandum*—
Of Branches bearing Beauteous Fruit.

September 17.—That is not to-day! Time has since been sliding on faster and further away from summer into autumn. Yet I have a fancy to mark the date of as sweet a September day as ever shone upon this garden. I believe the people who got most enjoyment out of the sunshine of that marvellous day were the butterflies. There was a real butterflies' ball held in the long border of single Dahlias! An hour before noon the flowers, beautiful in all the brilliance of their rainbow dyes, were visited by a dancing throng of Atalanta butterflies.

Yellow, red, orange, lilac, white—every flower had its Atalanta or two. They were the finest butterflies of the kind I ever saw. Strong on the wing, and faultless in the perfection of their white-edged black velvet and scarlet suits, they were the very embodiment of joyousness. Not a jot did they care, in their pride and joy of life, though a hundred deaths surrounded them. They knew nothing at all about that, indeed. Life in the balmy air with the sunshine and the flowers was all in all to them. A few shabby Gamma moths, and hosts of humble bees, combining business with amusement, mixed in with the butterflies. By noon the whole gay company dispersed. Later in the day I found those fickle Atalantas disporting themselves upon some yellow Everlastings in another part of the garden. Butterfly life varies in our garden year by year, but I never saw so many Atalantas. This summer we have seen few Peacocks or Tortoise-shells. Orange-tips (*Euchlœ cardamines*) were unusually plentiful in the spring, as were also our White Cabbages throughout the summer. So much fair weather as there

has been required a good supply! since two white butterflies in the morning are the sure sign of a fine day—and this summer they had always to be about in pairs. Often, a large brimstone has floated calmly by. The chalkhill blue (*Polyommatus Corydon*), for many past seasons noted as appearing about the Yew hedges in March, has failed us this year; there have been no humming-bird sphinxes, and the far-scented Auratum Lilies, where often on warm evenings I have sought great Hawkmoths, seem to have attracted nothing but scores of very inferior-looking Gammas. It is an intense pleasure to watch these various most beautiful beings, in all the freedom of their wayward wildness. No inducement would to me seem powerful enough—now that the barbarity of youth is past—to cause their capture and death, were they never so rare as specimens.

And now the rain and the falling leaves recall but too vividly the true date (Sept. 28), reminding me that I have to tell of the garden's autumnal desolation; yet if the days would only keep fair and bright, enough still

is left there to make one happy. The single Dahlias have won their way quite since last I wrote, and now I love them dearly. They are alone sufficient to light up half the garden. Our chief border is made up of seedlings, an exquisite variety of colours, mauve or rose-lilac coming least often, and a yellow with reddened or burnt-sienna tipped petals by far the loveliest. Named varieties are along with the Sunflowers opposite. White Queen I like the best—such large pure flowers. A White Queen with an Atalanta butterfly settling on it is a perfect little bit of contrasted colour. I am schooling myself to say Dah-lia, but habit is strong, and Daylia will persist in coming out. In Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* of 1803, vol. xix., p. 762, "Dahlia Coccinea, scarlet-flowered Dahlia," is figured. There is a note—"So named in honour of Andrew Dahl, a Swedish botanist; . . . not to be confounded with Dalea, a plant named after Dale, the friend of Ray." The pronunciation settled, the magazine goes on to say the Dahlia is "a native of South America, and may be considered as a hardy greenhouse

herbaceous perennial." These beautiful flowers are especially valuable, since rain has no effect on them, though rough winds so easily break the brittle stems. The double Dahlia is unknown in our garden; it has never been admitted. Fine as it is in form and colour, the dislike to it seems, perhaps, unreasonable, yet through some far-off association, I can never disconnect the double Dahlia from a sort of mixture of earwigs and pen-wipers! The clumps of Japanese Anemones, both white and rosy-grey, are full of an unfailing charm. We try to prolong their existence by snipping off the round seed-heads. One might as easily make ropes of sand. . . . The same service done to Dahlias is just within human possibility. The dark red-mauve variety shows an individuality which gives it great value in the autumn borders. The irregularly shaped flowers, whose narrow petals manifest an inclination to double, last longer than those of the other two kinds. Rain and wind have destroyed the beauty of Salvia Patens; it will bloom out again, however. The rich blue of this well-loved Salvia contrasts well

with white Anemones when mixed in the flower-glasses. As for cut flowers, they are always a doubtful pleasure. I gather them with a pang, and would rather enjoy them blooming their full time out in the garden. And yet what other ornament is there—even of finest porcelain—to compare with fresh-cut flowers? Nor are pictures, nor rich satins of Italy, sufficient without flowers to make your room look bright and habitable. Even that best decoration, walls well lined with books, is the better for a few flowers on the table. So that I am not yet prepared to follow the example of the old lady who never allowed one flower in her garden to be cut, and filled her glasses with artificial Roses! Sunflowers are sprouting round their strong stems, and surrounded thus by constellations of smaller suns, are perhaps even handsomer than before. We have two curiosities of Sunflower at this moment—curious as demonstrating a resolve to exist and flower under any circumstances whatever. One is a large thick-stemmed plant, which must have met at some time with some violent discouragement; it lies curled

round flat on the earth, looking almost like a poor starved cat with a large head; for, though quite overgrown with summer Phloxes and Roses, etc., one large flower at the end of its stalk tries to look up, while two or three of smaller size, growing along the stalk, do the same. In contrast to the deformity below it, a miniature Sunflower, slenderly graceful, with blossom no larger than a florin, springs out of the mortar between two bricks high up on the wall. There is no visible crevice, but some tiny nail-hole there must be where somehow a seed had lodged.

Though many borders have now begun to look forlorn, we feel the garden has done well. It is still quite full of flowers, in some parts gay, even, as it could never have been with the dulness of the most brilliant "bedding out." The entrance court is bright with Nicotiana, scarlet Pelargoniums, Zinnias, double white Petunia, and blue Lobelias. The long-desired pink China Roses, intended for these beds once, could not be found anywhere. Such simple loveliness is out of fashion, it seems! Torch plants (*Tritoma*)

are alight in all the edges of distant shrubberies. There are Japan Anemones and Œnothera everywhere. The Sweet Pea hedge by the tennis-court is out again in bloom. Marigolds take care of themselves. They keep going off and coming on again, shining out in the dark where least expected. Our Marigolds are of the deepest orange-gold. The seed was brought from Cannes, where their colour is always fine. They incline to turn pale with us, so we have to weed out pale faces in order to keep the stock black-eyed and fiery. Golden Rod is plentiful and useful, and I like it for the sake of old remembrance. Eighty years ago, as I used to hear, the gardens at Hampton Court knew no other flowers at all.* The great square beds were simply filled with Golden Rod. Those must have been happier days at Hampton Court, before carpet bedding was known—when the Yews were in all their beauty, and the fountain sent up

* In the royal private gardens, however, at Hampton Court, rare plants were cultivated so far back as 1691 ; such as the Green-flowered Knowltonia Vesicatoria, etc.

its single lofty jet, and children played upon the mimic harp wrought in the beautiful iron gate of the Pavilion Walk, or peeped through the bars at the browsing deer.

Amongst what may be called the ruck of flowers throughout the garden, are deep crimson Snapdragon, Zinnias, of all shades of colour; Verbenas, pink, white, red, and striped purple; low Phloxes, flesh-coloured and crimson—more beautiful than they ever were in their proper season; Musk, Michaelmas Daisies, Euphea Platycentra, Mignonette, Lobelias—the bronze-leaved Lobelia Cardinalis; lilac and white and pink Everlastings, white Marguerites and red Pyrethrums, Princes' Feather, yellow Heartsease, and Mrs. Sinkins Pink in a grand dash of second bloom—an endless variety, all making the effort to put forth their best, now that the last times draw so near. We might gather baskets of flowers and fill the house with them, were we so minded, and still hardly miss them from the garden. And yet has it not been said, "Bright tints that shine are but a sign that summer's past"? And full well I know the garden's

pleasure is even now growing towards the end. Roses, it need scarcely be said, abound; even Charles Lawson is red with a second bloom. A few Damask Roses are coming out by mistake. They look very strange, putting one in mind of a long-forgotten Rose, the Rose des Quatre Saisons. I see it clearly now, as I knew it in other days—pink all over with its October blossoming—in a garden whose loveliness lives only in the past. "Quarter Sessions" Rose, the ancient guardian of the place not unnaturally used to say! Shall I try to paint that garden? for surely none such exist any more. It was like Shelley's poem of the "Sensitive Plant," full of the poetry of trees, and grass, and flowers. . . . A nearly level space cut in the depths of a hanging wood; no enclosing boundary to be seen, save here and there, between the Rhododendrons, hints of a mossy low stone wall, or the Sweet Briar hedge at one end fencing off a stretch of Cedarn turf. On the upper edge of the gently sloping lawn a grand old Beech tree with silvered bole caught the rays of the morning sun. There was a giant Larch, all

bearded with long grey lichens; a Tulip tree, a standard Magnolia. Here also was the orangery; up its columns were twined trumpet Honeysuckles and Passion-flowers. In front, a sunny plot—oblong beds, with narrow walks between—was devoted to Carnations, Ranunculus, and many choicest favourites. A walk wound round the lawn, and upon the smooth grass were beds full of lovely old-fashioned flowers. Large tree-Roses, yellow Briars, and Scotch Roses (white and red), and the old Queen of Sweden, and tall poles covered with climbing Roses, loose-petalled and cherry-coloured—Noissettes, and Souvenir de Malmaison grew also on the turf, with arches of Honeysuckle and thickets of incense-breathing Spice plants. On the lower shady side the walk went on between bosquets of Kalmia and Azalea. Here also great heaped-up limestone rock formed a sort of natural wall between the garden and the wood. Every cranny was filled with rare and delicate Ferns and all shade-loving Alpine plants, while double white and blue Periwinkles streamed down everywhere. Alpine Roses, too, flourished

here luxuriantly. On the lower side, at one corner, a vista was cut through the trees, so that over the Rhododendrons, here kept quite low, one looked through a frame of Beeches far away across the wide sunlit valley, across the corn and pastures, hedgerows, coppice, and farm roofs, to the long range of wooded hills, and the grey tower cresting the distant headland. A little wire gate, hid behind the rocks, gave access to the garden from the house by a narrow pathway in the wood. I never knew that garden in its prime. When I remember it the sweetest flowers grew amid long weeds and grasses, and it had all the wild grace of a deserted garden; for those who loved it were gone, and the old gardener could scarce hobble round to tend his "Quarter Sessions" Roses; and now he too is long dead, and the place is—modernized. . . .

The Fantaisie has been an unfrequented spot of late. It is a wilderness of flower and seeding plants, somewhat damp and overgrown. "The Forest" will have to be remodelled, and we contemplate an annexe on the north side. Such rapid growth is

made that soon the character of both garden and Fantaisie must wholly change. The larger trees are fast losing that look of smiling youth which so enchants us in young newly planted wood. Each little tree is growing tall, and each begins to spread itself in uncompromising isolation. Evergreens encroach more and more upon the borders, crowding out the flowers and crowding each other, so as to render necessary many a painful sacrifice. Twelve months ago signs of the coming change were hardly visible. Since regret is unavailing, new plans must be laid to draw new pleasures from the inevitable. I note with some pride that the experiment of beheading Cryptomeria Elegans succeeds so far that in every instance the trees bush out healthily, instead of running up into brown raggedness.

As I write, near the library window, a dim glory seems to be stealing round. The light from a stormy sunset has fired the Virginian Creeper and the apples on a large tree beyond the stone ball at the corner of the wall. The leaves glow blood-red, and the fruit shines like molten ore. The tree

is decaying, with a huge brown fungus feeding on its heart. It is so old that a Virginian Creeper was planted to grow up the gaunt trunk, and Mistletoe is left to flourish over all the branches as it lists. Yet in a good apple year the fruit still clusters from the top of the tree down almost to the ground. And growing on its green lawn thus, one dreams a passing dream of the apples of the Hesperides, and the red Virginian climber is the great fiery scaled dragon gliding up through the leaves to gaze with dull eye seawards. But there are no maidens dancing in a ring, and I have just seen three hungry thrushes attack the apples unforbidden.

Nothing is so uncertain as pears. There has been a first-rate lot on a young Flemish Beauty, growing against the Gardener's cottage. They have been gathered earlier than usual, which may be the reason why they surpass in flavour and juiciness those of last year. Williams' Bon Chrétien, always good, is this year somewhat impaired in outward appearance by black dots all over the fruit. Can these dots be caused by the age of the

trees? In one half of the Vine-houses long bunches of white Muscats are hanging still. They are crisp and finely flavoured, and show well against a purple background of Madresfield Court. Next season we hope for a crop of Frontignacs, to satisfy the wish for old-fashioned thin-skinned Grapes. Round the windows the Vines are yellowing, with green fruit ripening fast. These are unusually sweet for outdoor Grapes, and have yielded a fair wine in their time. Large green Apples (*Reinette du Canada*), in the walled garden, are nearly as beautiful as the trees of Blenheim Orange which are reddening in the orchard.

Very pleasant and Arcadian in the mellow autumn sunshine are these days of Apple gathering! There is no undue haste; the man on the ladder up in the tree leisurely fills his basket. Baskets, half full of fruit, stand near, upon the leaf-strewn grass. Children are sure to gather round, and there is an odour of ripe Apples upon the air. After an indecision of some years' duration, I have at last arranged my September bill of fare—in Arcadia!—Grapes

and Pears to look at, Nectarines and "the curious Peach" to smell, fresh Figs to feed on in the morning, Golden Drop Plums all day long!

But, ah! there has chanced just now a golden drop of quite another kind. The last gold sand has fallen of the last hour of these dear garden days, and only one more word must be said—Farewell!